

**LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL –
MEDIUM TERM
CORPORATE STRATEGY 2001-2005
~~DRAFT~~**

**(To show changes considered by Cabinet on 6th November
following the consultation exercise)**

Introduction

Delivering a Bright Future for Leicestershire

Leicestershire County Council is the largest provider of public services in the County. A new County Council was elected in June 2001. The **County Council has approved this** ~~Administration have decided to prepare a~~ Strategy to guide the work the Council does for the people of Leicestershire over the next four years.

The Council will continue to deliver a wide range of services. **Our aim is to ensure that these services help Leicestershire people to enjoy life in a safe, prosperous, healthy and attractive County.** We think that there are some key issues, identified in this document, which should be tackled as a priority if this aim is to be met.

To achieve our aim:

- **We will provide community leadership for the County.** We will ensure that Leicestershire communities play an important part in identifying the problems that affect them and help shape the solutions to those problems. We will take the lead role in this important task, which will include the preparation of a community strategy covering a range of public services.
- **We will deliver services that provide value for money.** We will examine a mix of public, private and voluntary sector options to provide effective, efficient and economical services.
- **We will support a highly motivated, well-trained workforce to deliver clearly defined service targets.** It is necessary and important to equip the County Council's workforce so that staff will be able to respond positively to the challenges in this document.
- **We will investigate innovative solutions to create improvements to services.** These solutions will need to take advantage of the benefits that information technology can bring.
- **We will support effective partnerships to achieve real improvements in the way that services are delivered.** Many other organisations deliver public services to the people who live and work in Leicestershire. A combined and co-ordinated approach will be required between all these agencies to tackle difficult issues concerning health, education, transport, ~~and~~ the environment **and sustainable development.**

We believe that significant improvements in services to the people of Leicestershire are possible. However, availability of resources will dictate the speed and extent to which the priorities proposed in this ~~draft~~ Strategy can be

achieved. We will also need to respond to new Government directives whilst continuing to deliver local services and reacting to increasing demands.

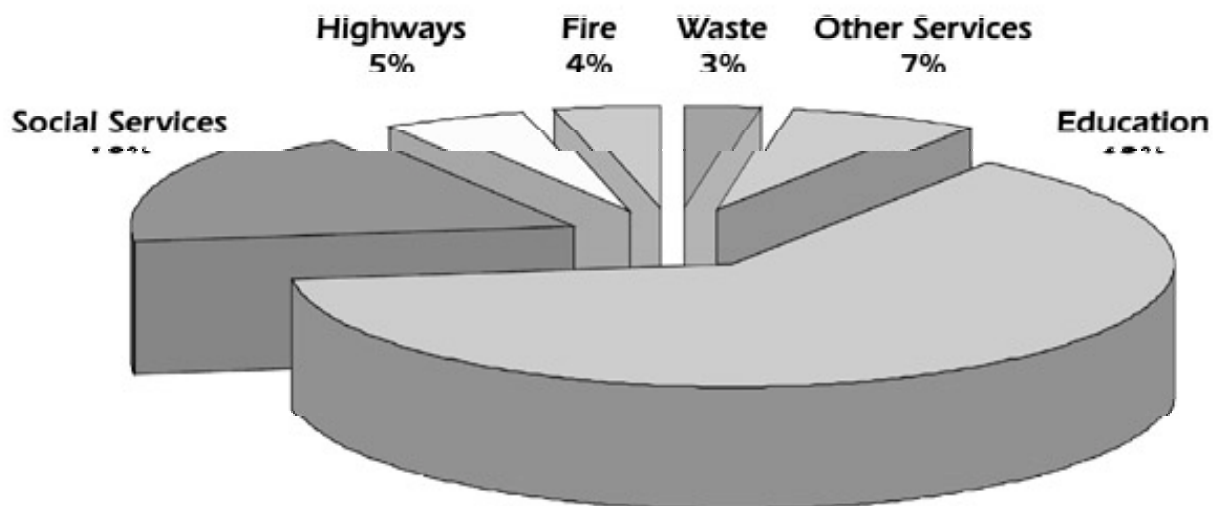
This Strategy builds on commitments made in the Administration's manifesto. It also incorporates changes made in response to the many helpful comments received on the consultation draft. This consultation document has been produced so that our partners and the people of Leicestershire can help us identify the right priorities and comment on the way we should work with them to address these. We want the final Strategy to be a document of value and not a plan which gathers dust on a shelf. Each year we will review its content and our progress on its implementation. ***The Strategy will also contribute to the preparation of a community strategy for the County area but will not take its place.*** Please tell us what you think about the draft Strategy and our approach. Details of how to respond are at the back.

Councillor Harry Barber,
Leader,
Leicestershire County Council.

About Leicestershire County Council

The County Council is the largest local authority in Leicestershire. We deliver a wide range of services including education, social care, waste disposal, road maintenance, libraries, museums and consumer protection. Increasingly, we work with our partner organisations to do this.

The County Council will spend £500m on these services in 2001/02 in the following proportions:



The County Council has already adopted a constitution based on the Cabinet and Scrutiny model. We intend to work within this structure to deliver better, more accountable government in Leicestershire with clear strategic direction and leadership.

The Administration's objectives are:

- Working together to deliver quality services
- Achieving excellence in education and learning
- **Meeting health and care needs**
- Improving our transport system
- Caring for our environment
- Promoting economic well-being
- Supporting culture and leisure
- Making communities safer
- Managing waste effectively.

The ways that the Council will achieve its objectives are set out in a range of service plans and strategies that it is required to prepare. The key activities from these plans are summarised each year in a Best Value Performance Plan that allows the Council's annual performance to be measured against certain indicators.

This ~~draft~~ Strategy sets out the key priorities that the ~~Administration~~ County Council intends ~~the Council~~ to focus on over a four-year period. ***It is not therefore intended to include reference to all the services that the County Council delivers.*** The extent to which we are successful in addressing these priorities and meeting the targets set out in this Strategy will be reported through the Best Value Performance Plan each year. ***This Plan already includes relevant performance indicators and targets. The development of a Public Service Agreement with the Government will also require us to review these and to set specific and challenging targets for many of the priorities set out in this Strategy.***

Working Together to Deliver Quality Services

The County Council has the principal role in providing community leadership for the people of Leicestershire. We recognise that to carry out this role effectively, we must ensure that the identification of needs and the solutions to problems reflect the views of local communities. Improvements to the quality of services delivered to Leicestershire people will also require a co-ordinated effort by a range of national, regional and local organisations.

We will work to bring services closer to where people live and to improve access to services for people who live in rural areas or away from town centres. Services will be accessible to all groups in the community and responsive to people's needs. We will act positively to tackle inequality and discrimination *building on our existing approach to equal opportunities*. We believe that the multi tier system of local government in Leicestershire gives opportunities both to plan services strategically and to bring services closer to people. We will work with the district, parish and town councils and with other agencies to achieve this.

We will:

- Work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including district and parish councils, public, private, voluntary, business and academic sectors **and regional organisations**. Our key partnerships **include** the Life Long Learning Partnership, the proposed LeicesterShire Strategic Sub Regional Partnership, the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, the Leicestershire Waste Strategy Partnership, the Forum for a Better Leicestershire, local crime and disorder partnerships and the County Partnership for Safer Communities, the Health Improvement Plan Partnership, County/District Local Strategic Partnerships, and the Community Legal Service Partnership **and the CVS Community Partnership**.
- Lead the preparation of a community strategy for Leicestershire and assist in establishing a Local Strategic Partnership for the County. The Leicestershire Community Strategy will contain a long term strategic vision for the sustainable future of Leicestershire. We will also work with district councils and district based local strategic partnerships in the preparation of more detailed community strategies for Leicestershire's seven district areas.
- Pursue improved joint arrangements for consultation with local communities so that the views of local people play an important role in decision making. Working with our partners we will establish a citizens' panel, hold at least four citizens' juries each year and support at least twenty local consultation events, including village appraisals, 'visioning' and 'planning for real' events.

- Introduce new and improved arrangements to co-ordinate service delivery with other agencies. These will include arrangements to address how the Government's target, that 100% of services that can be delivered by electronic means should be available electronically by 2005, can be implemented within the resources available.
- Work with other councils and agencies to investigate how service delivery can be improved through cross boundary collaboration.

Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning

Leicestershire's children and their parents have a right to high quality educational provision that provides equal opportunities for children of *all different* abilities irrespective of whether they live in urban or rural communities. Proper funding by the Government is essential if this is to be achieved. We will continue to be an active member of the Fair Funding for Education campaign.

We will encourage and assist schools and colleges to be seen as positive assets in the communities they serve. We will work with governing bodies and diocesan authorities to ensure that school facilities are available to all. Schools and colleges must provide a safe atmosphere in which learners of all ages can develop their abilities to the full. We will continue to support small village schools that offer high standards of education.

We will aim to deliver a full range of services to children with special educational needs and a positive programme for very able children to develop their talents. We will encourage schools to implement a focussed anti-bullying programme.

We will ensure that libraries and museums play *their* ~~an appropriate~~ part in the achievement of life-long learning.

We will work to maintain youth and community education services, building on the good OFSTED report and Best Value review. To do this we will need to work positively with the Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions Service across all aspects of the Council's activities to develop coherence in the delivery of services.

We will:

- Aim to increase academic achievement so that results at all four Key Stages place Leicestershire in the top 25% of English counties by 2005. The results for Key Stages 1 and 3 are already in the top 25%, but results at Key Stages 2 and 4 need to be improved.
- Use the Government code of practice on relationships with schools to make sure that there is a shared understanding of responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver national and local priorities.
- Move towards a common first time admissions policy across the whole of the County.
- Improve opportunities for, and raise the educational attainment of, children looked after by the County Council and other vulnerable children.

- ***Continue to develop and implement policies for children with special educational needs.***

Meeting Health and Care Needs

Quality health and social care services are important to the quality of life of individuals and local communities. Users of these services and their carers have a right to expect information and services co-ordinated to meet their needs, whoever is delivering the services. We will take the lead role in working collaboratively with the National Health Service, other local authorities, the *private and voluntary independent* sectors, and with users and carers themselves, to help achieve this.

We will lobby the Government to provide free personal care as well as nursing care for people in residential and nursing homes.

We will work with our partners to improve the general health of the community. We recognise that changes in the organisational structure of the National Health Service will require new relationships and we wish to see the role of elected members of the County Council properly recognised in those relationships.

We will:

- Review residential care for older people in the light of the impact of national care standards and other factors on County Council services and *private and voluntary independent* sector providers.
- Work with the National Health Service and others to develop prevention and rehabilitation services to help older people and people with disabilities to live as independently as possible.
- Work in co-operation with *private and voluntary independent* sector providers to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and consistency of home care services, including the community meals and laundry services.
- Work with users, carers and our statutory, *private and voluntary and independent* sector partners to develop and improve services for people with learning disabilities and those who suffer from mental ill-health.
- Improve, as “Corporate Parent” to children we look after, the quality and range of fostering and adoption services. We will review the provision of community homes, particularly the future of the Blaby Unit.

Improving Our Transport System

An effective transport system is vital for all Leicestershire residents and its businesses. The increasing need and opportunity to travel has many implications and costs as well as bringing substantial benefits. Our two Local Transport Plans set out how we intend to ensure that transport infrastructure and services are improved *including co-ordination between different modes of transport (road, rail, bus, cycling, walking)* for the period up to 2006. This will be done in ways that seek to enhance the environment and provide appropriate access for Leicestershire people to facilities and services in a safe and convenient manner. The outcomes will bring about a continuous improvement in sustainability and people's quality of life, improve integration both within and between travel modes and ensure that the transport system supports the wider objectives of the County Council. There will be relief for the worst affected settlements through by-passes. We will oppose the introduction of road charging, including workplace parking charges and road tolls, as a means of reducing traffic demand in any location that would have a detrimental effect upon Leicestershire people.

We will:

- Improve countywide bus services to give better access to employment and services. Our aim is that 95% of people will have direct access to an hourly bus service, or better. We aim to make this affordable not only in the short term while Government 'challenge' funds are available but also in the long term.
- Improve road safety and implement programmes to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads, particularly children and other vulnerable road users.
- Encourage and support the development and implementation of employer and school travel plans. A programme will be developed to increase the number of schools and businesses committed to adopting these plans.
- Bring highways to a standard of maintenance that better meets the expectation of users while minimising the overall costs through a long-term approach.

Caring for our Environment

Leicestershire is an attractive place in which to live and work. This enhances the quality of life of its people and helps to attract investment into the County. We are committed to ensuring that the best of Leicestershire *and its heritage* is protected and enhanced and that the worst is improved. Much can be done by ensuring that investment in new development occurs mainly within our urban areas and that it brings with it associated improvements to the local environment and local services. *We will continue to support the National Forest and other woodland areas.*

We will:

- Be active in ensuring that the provisions of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan are implemented. This Plan sets limits on the amount of new greenfield land that should be developed for employment and housing.
- Continue to support a critical examination of the impact which policies and programmes have on the environment and the lives of Leicestershire people, both now and for the future.
- Build on the existing success of the SHIRE grants scheme in helping local communities influence priorities for improving their environment. The SHIRE grants approach will be extended to other grant schemes.
- Maintain and improve the network of Rights of Way in Leicestershire. Access to the countryside is also a key factor in attracting people to visit the County as tourists. We will ensure that the significant majority of Rights of Way are easy to use by 2005.

Supporting Culture and Leisure

We are required by the Government to produce, by the end of 2002, a Cultural Strategy for the County area covering activities including arts, sports, libraries, museums, heritage, *records*, play, tourism, leisure and countryside recreation. *The Cultural Strategy will build on a range of existing plans for these activities which* ~~These activities~~ also contribute significantly to the achievement of life-long learning.

We will:

- Improve access to libraries and the quality of library services as part of an integrated approach to ***delivering a broad range of services*** service delivery in local communities and to meet national standards. ***In doing so we will endeavour to meet national standards for libraries and delivering services by electronic means as well as bringing services closer to people.***
- Support the development of theatre and arts in the County's market towns and other areas of the County.
- Safeguard and develop our country parks and establish Bosworth Battlefield as a foremost visitor attraction.
- Seek opportunities for the continuing delivery of quality museums and arts services in the light of the changing national and regional agenda.

Promoting Economic Well-Being

We will work with our economic partners to attract new and sustainable employment opportunities into the County and to support Leicestershire businesses. By helping to implement the Leicestershire Economic Strategy we will ensure that partners synchronise *bring together* their efforts with the needs of businesses to improve the competitive position of the County. This will include support for small and starter businesses, particularly those in rural areas, which will help to diversify the rural economy and provide essential services such as village post offices and shops. Activities to bring tourists into Leicestershire are also important for the prosperity of the County and we plan to support and market such opportunities. We recognise that this will involve working actively with local, sub-regional and regional partners and exploiting the potential for external funding.

We will:

- Work with our partners to establish a single Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership for Leicestershire and Leicester to deliver the Economic Strategy for Leicestershire, i.e County and City, and to ensure key economic priorities are met. The Economic Strategy aims to see Leicestershire's GDP per head increase in relation to the UK average.
- Work with others to promote business competitiveness by encouraging firms to increase exports, break into new markets, and build strong local linkages between suppliers and customers. We also aim to encourage firms to invest in the skills of their workforce and support innovation and the transfer of technology. The Economic Strategy aims to raise manufacturing productivity in relation to the East Midlands and UK average.
- Work to help create a climate for investment and an economy based on both local business growth and inward investment. This will include support for businesses that diversify economic activity in areas suffering job losses in sectors such as traditional manufacturing and farming. The Economic Strategy aims to increase the number of businesses and jobs in the County by 2005.
- Work to help maintain the unemployment rate for the County significantly below the region's average.
- Work with others to promote the benefits of learning to give Leicestershire a competitive edge in the acquisition and implementation of knowledge and skills. The Economic Strategy aims to see the great majority of the population with a competence in ICT.

- Support consumers and legitimate traders by identifying and reducing frauds and malpractice against consumers. We will also assist businesses to understand their responsibilities and to improve compliance with statutory standards.

Making Communities Safer

We will work with the Police, District Councils, Health, Probation, Fire and the voluntary sector to deliver priorities identified through the local crime and disorder partnerships. The contribution of the Youth Offending Service and the Drug Action Team will be a key element of this work *and we will work with others to co-ordinate action on a range of personal safety initiatives, including racial harassment and domestic violence. We will also continue to work with partners to develop effective plans to respond to emergencies such as flooding.*

We will:

- Ensure that our services are delivered with safety in mind.
- Participate in initiatives to promote safety in and around people's homes.
- ***Ensure that County Council services contribute to targets set in Local crime and disorder strategies and responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act.***
- Ensure that the County Council's representatives on the Leicestershire Police Authority communicate the wishes of Leicestershire people for continuous improvements in their personal safety and an increased and responsive police presence, particularly in the rural areas.

Managing Waste Effectively

The ability to dispose of waste in landfill sites is declining and alternatives must be found. Effective action to increase recycling, composting and waste minimisation requires a joint approach with district councils and the private sector. The following measures are key to achieving a reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill.

We will:

- Work with district councils to develop an integrated approach to the management of household waste. We aim to have a joint household waste strategy in place during 2002.
- Improve Civic Amenity Sites to ensure that they contribute to recycling targets. Replacement sites will be sought for Loughborough and Sileby.
- Work with District Councils to develop new recycling facilities.
- Promote waste minimisation by continuing to support household composting and other initiatives, including the National Waste Awareness campaign.

DELIVERING THE PRIORITIES

Resources

Availability of resources will dictate the speed and extent to which our priorities are achieved. The Government has issued spending plans and forecasts. If these plans and forecasts change, this inevitably will have an impact on the delivery of our priorities and targets.

A Government review of local government funding is under way. It is clear that this needs to produce a fairer share of Government funding for Leicestershire. It should allow us to have more flexibility in the use of Council Tax levies to achieve our priorities. We will press the Government to ensure that adequate funding is made available to enable our priorities to be met.

We will need to respond to policy changes as a result of new Government directives whilst continuing to deliver local services. We will also need to take account of increases in demand as a result of demographic changes (for example increased numbers of older people, children with statements of educational needs), heightened public expectations of services and increased costs of providing quality services.

Resources can also be made available by making efficiency savings and maximising external funding. Achieving other priorities, for example more integrated service delivery and waste management initiatives, will require substantial capital investment.

- We will continue to press the Government to increase the level of funding it provides for Leicestershire schools.
- We will work with national, regional and local partners to bring additional funding to Leicestershire. This will be used to support schemes that meet local priorities for needs and opportunities, while also realising national and regional objectives.
- We will increase the resources available for our priorities by making efficiency savings (particularly through best value reviews) and redirecting spending to higher priority areas.
- We will explore the possibility of partnerships with the private sector, the more effective use of existing assets and the disposal of surplus assets.

Public Service Agreement

We will pursue the development of a Public Service Agreement with the Government. This will involve negotiating an agreement which commits us to achieve targets over three years. The targets will be challenging and will only be achieved with the support of others. In return the Government offers substantial financial rewards to the County Council if it achieves the

negotiated targets after three years and flexibility locally to improve service delivery. The major financial rewards of a successful Public Service Agreement will therefore be available after the period covered by this plan.

Organisation

Our aim is to deliver services which offer quality and value for money to users and taxpayers whether they are delivered through in-house teams, private and voluntary organisations or partnerships with other bodies. We recognise the importance of a highly motivated, well-trained workforce delivering clearly defined service targets.

The current internal structures of the County Council reflect traditional departmental boundaries and do not always meet the challenge of co-ordinated service delivery.

- We will review current methods of developing service policies and current organisational structures with the aim of promoting co-ordinated service delivery which is better for customers, more focussed on outcomes and backed by robust performance management systems.
- We will develop an effective human resources strategy for the Council's employees, including implementation of the new job evaluation scheme and policies to promote the recruitment, development and retention of key employees.

Making the Strategy Work

- The Corporate Strategy also appears on the County Council Website – www.leics.gov.uk.
- We will report on our progress in achieving the priorities set out in this Strategy each year in our Best Value Performance Plan. The County Council will seek to maintain a dialogue with the partnerships and organisations with which it works regarding the implementation of this strategy.