

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 MAY 2007**

**POSITION STATEMENT BY THE LEADER**

**Local Elections**

- I would like to congratulate those members who were recently elected to District Councils and in particular those members who have taken up leadership and cabinet roles in their Districts. I sympathise with those members who were unsuccessful.
- It is important that we use the opportunity afforded by the election results, particularly where there has been a change of control, to allow the two tiers of local government to work better together. I look forward to an early meeting with the District Council Leaders to discuss the way forward.
- It is also important for the County Council to work closely with the City Council. I congratulate the new Leader of the City Council on his election victory and, although he is of a different party, I hope that strong, single party leadership might benefit the City in the way in which such leadership has certainly benefited the County Council.

**Travellers**

- Unauthorised encampments of travellers within the County continue to present a significant challenge due to the lack of suitable transit sites. The County Council has explored potential transit sites from within its own land holdings and those of District Councils but without success.
- A funding bid of £1.6m has been submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government for the provision of a non-site specific transit site. We are still waiting to hear whether this bid has been successful.
- On 26 April I met with the Minister responsible, Meg Munn MP, to discuss these difficulties and to explore changes in legislation to enable travellers to be moved across local authority boundaries. A City Council representative was also present. The Minister was unable to offer legislative changes at this time but indicated that consideration would be given to fund proposals where transit provision was created adjacent to or as part of existing permanent sites. I have asked officers to explore this and report back in time for the funding bid announcement which is expected in early July.

### **The Council's Financial Prospects**

- The Director of Corporate Resources recently gave a presentation to members of the Council on the financial prospects likely to result from the next Comprehensive Spending Review. The requirement to produce cashable savings each year from 2008/9 equivalent to 3% of budgets is likely to be extremely challenging and have implications for jobs and the way we provide services. I was pleased there was a good turn-out from members at the presentation and I hope that members who were unable to be there will have had the opportunity to look at the slides used in the presentation which have subsequently been circulated.