CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

Contact officer: Fran Bower (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) – MK 254165

1. **Purpose**

1.1 To review the work of the Corporate Policy Development Committee (CPDC) for the current year and to look ahead to the coming year’s work programme.

2. **Review of Meetings**

2.1 This year CPDC has met on seven occasions. There has been no need for extra meetings, partly because the new committee structure that has been in place since the beginning of the Council year has meant that the Executive Scrutiny Panel has considered all call-ins.

2.2 The new structure has also allowed the Committee to concentrate on policy development, as all performance review and scrutiny has been dealt with elsewhere.

2.3 The clear functional role of Committees and Panels in the new structure has been a benefit in work programme planning terms with most issues finding a logical home.

2.4 The Committee, being aware that the new structure has meant more scheduled Committee meetings for both Members and officers to attend, has not chosen to use Review Group working as a way of doing additional work outside of CPDC meetings.

2.5 Major issues considered have included:

- The Council’s Community Strategy
- Central Milton Keynes Review Group’s final report
- The role of local councils in Milton Keynes
- The planned development of the Civic Hub
- Medium and Long term Property Management Strategy: in November and again at this meeting
- Scoping a major piece of research into how local government in Milton Keynes should develop; this will be carried out over several meetings by the whole Committee
3. **Achievements and Effectiveness**

3.1 As a rule it has been possible to keep agenda to no more than 3 substantive items, thus allowing reasonable time for issues to be properly debated.

3.2 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs decided that the Budget should remain with Policy Development Committees because of the retained Directorate links. CPDC considered the Revenue Budget and other Policy Development Committees’ comments at its November meeting, ahead of the Cabinet publishing its proposals, as well as receiving those proposals in January.

3.3 Little comment on the budget was forwarded to Cabinet from the Policy Development Committees, possibly because the Government’s relatively large settlement meant that the budget this year was less contentious than usual. In policy development terms, these meetings should bear in mind the medium term and not concentrate solely on the next year’s budget.

3.4 Members have a great deal of information to assimilate for these meetings that consider the budget. Alternative formats, such as working groups or workshops, might be worth considering for the future. In particular, the committee proposes that opposition members be invited to the "challenge meetings" that formed part of this year’s budgetary discussions.

3.5 It is usually difficult to form an objective judgement on the work of a committee, but in Autumn of 2004 this was made possible to some extent by the Improvement and Development Agency, whose representatives observed and reported back to each Policy Development Committee. Corporate Policy Development Committee received a very favourable report, particularly in respect of the style and atmosphere of the meeting and the content and quality of its discussion and outcomes.

4. **Implementation Tracking**

4.1 The Committee has made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet and other bodies this year and in order to better monitor their progress has asked that the decisions of the cabinet and others on each should be formally reported back to the Committee. Details of the Committee’s resolutions are set out in the Annex to this report.

5. **Future Work Programme**

5.1 Because there are no local elections this year, there should be continuity within the Committee, which should allow effective following up of items suggested or already worked on in the year 2004.

5.2 It is important that work programming for the coming year leads to focused work on a few key issues, rather than a reactive and scattered approach and that officers other than those who service the committee are equally committed to the value of its work.

5.3 It is to be hoped that the detailed research into the development of local government in Milton Keynes to be carried out by the full Committee will prove to
be even more thorough and incisive than the previous successful in-depth research carried out by review groups in the past.

5.4 The Committee is obliged to receive relevant Policy Framework documents and will also consider issues that Members identify for investigative work leading to recommendations for strategy or policy development.

5.5 The Chair, spokespersons and scrutiny support officers have met regularly over the year and contact has been kept up with Resources Directorate Management Team. A large number of potential issues for the Committee have been suggested over the year; those which might be considered for next year’s work include:

- Whether the post PPP Council structure is suitable for its purpose
- HR Strategy
- Development of Capital Strategy
- Risk and risk management
- Impact Analyses, possibly using data from the Council’s 2003 Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Gershon

5.6 The first meeting in the new Council year will consider:

- HBS Future Policy Development
- 10 Year Plan for Local Government

5.7 Items coming up on the Forward Plan that could be considered for the Work Programme:

- Records Management Strategy/Records Retention Schedule
- Civic Hub
- Annual Audit Letter 2004/2005
- Corporate Plan (including Best Value Performance Plan)

6 Conclusion

6.1 The Committee would like to place on record its appreciation of the input of Fran Bower, Justin Sismey, Lynn Avey, John Boothroyde and John Moffoot in guiding and assisting its work, which would otherwise have been very much poorer this year.