

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **3 August 2004**

By: **Chief Executive and Chief Officers**

Title of report: **Reconciling Policy and Resources – State of the County 2004**

Purpose of report: **To enable Cabinet to consider Policy and Financial Planning guidelines for 2005/06 and beyond.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1. note the report; and**
  - 2. set initial financial guidelines and recommend the County Council to agree the policy steers (Appendix 3) as the basis for the Reconciling Policy and Resources work for 2005/06 and beyond.**
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### **1. Financial Implications**

1.1 The report will enable the Cabinet to set Policy and Financial Planning guidelines as the basis for the Reconciling Policy and Resources work for 2005/06 and beyond.

### **2. Policy Context**

2.1 Appendix 1 sets out an overview of the national policy context within which the Council's priorities and financial targets need to be agreed.

### **3. Financial Context**

3.1 A financial overview is set out in Appendix 2 including a commentary on the recent Spending Review announcements as well as local spending pressures. In terms of the Spending Review, as feared, the financial position outside schools will be difficult, particularly over the medium term.

### **4. Policy Steers 2005/06**

4.1 In addition to understanding the national context, a core element of the Reconciling Policy and Resources Initiative is the Policy Steers set by County Council for both the whole Council and for each portfolio. When the Policy Steers were set two years ago it was clear that they represented a medium-term strategy and a statement of priorities to guide the business planning processes of the Authority. It is, therefore assumed that they are unlikely to change significantly except where short-term milestones have been included. Appendix 3 sets out the Policy Steers.

### **5. Strategic Performance**

5.1 Appendix 4 sets out an overview of performance management at East Sussex County Council and sets out the key performance issues for the Authority.

### **6. Strategic Risk**

6.1 Appendix 5 provides an overview of the key strategic risks facing the Authority which will need to be considered as future plans and targets are developed.

## **7. Next Steps**

7.1 Once County Council has agreed the formal planning guidelines, the Reconciling Policy and Resources process will ensure the Policy Steers are worked up into practical programmes of actions with appropriate resources and clear targets for when and how they will be completed.

7.2 In agreeing improvement areas within each portfolio and setting specific targets, careful consideration will need to be given to current performance, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. Information about performance and PSA targets is clearly laid out in the current Council Plan and further information (including external comparators) will be provided as it becomes available. The pattern of 2 x 2 meetings, discussions by Cabinet Briefing, reports to Cabinet and County Council and consultation with partners, with which Members are familiar, will lead to the production of the detailed Council Plan for 2005/06.

7.3 The Deputy Leader has indicated that he will table proposals at the meeting. The Cabinet will need to view the issues in the medium term as well as considering issues such as the following in respect of next year:

1. council tax planning assumption;
2. policy priorities;
3. relative priorities/protection;
4. areas for investment and improvement;
5. consequent level of efficiencies and other savings to be modelled.

## **8. Communications Plan for Reconciling Policy and Resources**

8.1 Raising the profile of the Council's priorities and policy steers is a key aim of the whole Council. The corporate Communications Team is playing a key role in this by highlighting these in the Council's residents' magazine 'Your County' as well as on the Council's website and through the media. Work is also about to start on exhibition material that will highlight Council priorities. As in previous years, a specific Communications Plan will be developed for the ongoing Reconciling Policy and Resources initiative, which will include public consultation and will cover a range of audiences from residents through to staff and partners.

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