

**COUNCIL
4 DECEMBER 2002**

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Since the report made to the Council on 30 October 2002 the Executive has met on 19 November 2002. Executive decisions were taken at that meeting and these are brought to the attention of the Council in this report.

1 MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES AND COMMITMENT BUDGET 2003/04 – 2005/06

- 1.1 Previous reports have drawn attention to the potential for a budget gap of around £5.75 million on the General Fund Revenue Account by 2005/06 and the need for this to be addressed within an overall financial strategy. This involves a review of the Commitment Budget and the development of options to bridge the gap between spending levels and resources through the Budget Working Groups that were established in the summer to ensure we achieve the long planned 'soft landing'.
- 1.2 In this context, whilst work on developing budget options for the coming year and beyond is in progress, the Executive has approved a number of specific changes to the Commitment Budget and has also approved a number of virements. There are two further virements which exceed £0.100m in value and are therefore recommended to the Council for approval.
- 1.3 The Executive has also reviewed and approved new Medium Term Objectives for each Service Area which will ensure that resources continue to be directed towards priority areas. Taken together these actions establish the framework within which the Executive will develop its draft budget proposals for the coming year. These will be considered by the Executive on 17 December 2002 shortly after the Local Government Finance Settlement has been announced. Thereafter the draft budget proposals will be available for consultation with Select Committees and other interested parties before being brought to the full Council meeting for consideration in February.

1.4 RECOMMENDATION that the following virements be approved by the Council

	Corp £000	Educ £000	Env £000	Leisure £000	SS&H £000	Other £000
Environment Recharges – Recalculation reflecting new structure and functions of department	-79	-20	241	-54	-88	-
Pension costs – allocation of pensions increase previously included as corporate pressure	86	61	87	80	135	-449

2 COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES 2002/03

- 2.1 The Capital Programme for 2002/03 approved by the Council includes an allocation of £500,000 for community and/or environmental initiatives to pump prime local projects undertaken in partnership with other organisations and/or to directly fund a number of other small projects. In addition, a sum of £130,000 remains available from the similar allocation made in previous years. The Executive have now approved a list of appropriate projects covering a wide range of schemes across the Borough and linked into the key priority areas identified through the Council's Medium Term Objectives. Financial allocations have been identified for each project and this will enable each specific initiative to be developed during the remainder of the current financial year.

3 OTHER MATTERS

- 3.1 Other matters dealt with by the Executive are listed below:

- Single Tender Action for Work at Harmans Water Swimming Pool
- Social Services Replacement IT System
- Crowthorne Enterprise Centre – lease of additional accommodation

4 LOOKING AHEAD

- 4.1 The Executive Forward Plan will be published on 1 December 2002 and made available for public inspection at Easthampstead House. Over the next few months the work of the Executive will continue to be dominated by preparation and consideration of next year's budget and associated actions. This is being made more difficult this year by the major uncertainties over the Standing Spending Assessment following the Government's major review of the formula. Despite this, it is anticipated that the Executive's budget proposals will be released as a consultation document immediately following the next scheduled meeting on 17 December 2002. Several other important matters will be dealt with at that Executive meeting as identified in the current Executive Forward Plan. Members will also be aware that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment results are scheduled for publication during the week commencing 9 December 2002.