

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MEETING OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING REVIEW PANEL (22/09/04)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At its meeting on 22 September 2004, the Economy and Planning Review Panel during the course of its business made two recommendations to Cabinet, which are set out below:

(i) **National Park**

The Head of Development Control gave an update on the implications of the Secretary of State's decision on the boundary of the New Forest National Park and the possible delegation of development control decision making. The Panel noted that, in view of the revised boundary, it was far less likely that the Development Control function would be delegated back to the District Council. This would mean that a third of the planning decisions currently made by the District Council would in future be made by the National Park Authority. Members then discussed the options for future service delivery, and felt that it would not be desirable for professional officer teams to be split. Accordingly, the Panel felt it would be preferable if officers could work jointly for both Authorities, thus providing better co-ordination and continuity of knowledge and experience. Accordingly, the Panel wished to recommend:

“That the Cabinet be advised that the Economy and Planning Review Panel feel that the District Council should support the principle of joint Officer teams for the provision of the administrative function of Development Control under the National Park”.

(ii) **Economic Development Service – Business Development Officer Post**

The Panel received reports from the lead Scrutiny Members on the Service Plans for both the Economic Development Service and the Planning Service. Meetings had taken place with officers from each service, during which they had discussed the key issues in the Service Plans and identified the main points for reporting to the Panel. In reporting on the Economic Development Service Plan, the Panel Chairman reported that the post of Business Development Officer had been vacant for some time, partly because of budget issues. The Chairman reminded the Panel that the Service Plan had been presented to and agreed by, the Panel in January 2004. At that meeting, representatives of the New Forest Business Partnership and Federation of Small Businesses had attended to consider the Service Plan. They were supportive of the Plan and recognised its strong links to the Economic Development Strategy which was a jointly adopted statement between the Council and the Partnership. The need to develop support for the Business Partnership was highlighted. It was anticipated that this extra resource could come from the proposed post.

The Service Plan had been prepared on the basis that the Business Development Officer would be appointed during the year. Without the post, the intentions of the Plan could not be fulfilled.

In conclusion, the Chairman felt that, whilst mindful of current budget pressures, there was a need for the post to be filled as soon as possible. Apart from one Member, the Panel fully supported this view.

Although the Panel noted that they would get the opportunity to discuss this matter in more detail when the overall Economic Development Service Plan and Expenditure Plan were considered at their November meeting, they felt it would be more helpful if the Cabinet could be advised of their view at an early stage, rather than wait until November. They therefore resolved as follows:

“That Cabinet be advised that the Economy and Planning Review Panel feel that the Business Development Officer post should be filled as soon as possible, and that the Panel will be considering this and other issues in further detail when it considers the updated Economic Development Service Plan and any related Expenditure Plan issues at its November meeting”.

Further Information:

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Background Papers: