

8 NOVEMBER 1993

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 8 November 1993.

p Cllr Mrs J K Vernon-Jackson MBE JP - Chairman  
p Cllr S S Wade - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

p Mrs N E Alldridge  
p K E Austin  
p Mrs O A M Badland  
p S Bailey  
p P A Baker  
p Mrs P D Baker  
p Mrs M J Bannister  
p Major C Beeton MBE  
p W E B Boothby  
p E R Bowring  
p Mrs D M Brooks  
p D S Burdle  
p R J Burnett  
p J E Coles  
p Miss S A Cooke  
p D E Cracknell  
p J G Craig  
p W F Croydon  
p B A Cullers  
p G Dawson  
p J J Dawson  
p Miss P A Drake  
p B C Earwicker  
e Major S S Elvery  
p Mrs L K Errington  
p L P Gibbs  
p W J Greer  
p A J C Griffiths

Councillors:

p R C H Hale  
p F R Harrison  
p Mrs Y P Holloway  
p Mrs A M Howe  
p J M Hoy  
p J A G Hutchins JP  
p J Lovering  
p J Maynard  
p N D M McGeorge  
p Mrs M McLean  
p Miss G E Meaden  
p R F Orton  
p P G Pearce-Smith  
p C G Ramsden  
p A W Rice TD  
p Miss G M Rickus CBE  
p Mrs M J Robinson  
p D N Scott  
p Lieut Col M J Shand  
p S A Shepherd  
p A J Simmons  
p Mrs B Smith  
p Mrs L P Snashall  
p G Spikins  
p R G Vernon-Jackson  
p G H Wales  
p Mrs D Wilson  
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

N J Gibbs, D A Gurney, Mrs M Holmes, E S Johnson, I B Mackintosh, Miss J Debnam, T R Simpson and, for part of the morning session, P Crabb, B Baker, J Mascall, B Morgan, W Whitcher and M Yates.

36. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 1993, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) Sir James Scott Bt

The Chairman announced the death of Sir James Scott Bt, the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire. Sir James had enjoyed a distinguished career in the army, retiring in 1969. He was Chairman of the local branch of the Country Landowners Association; a County Councillor, Magistrate, High Sheriff and Deputy Lieutenant. He was appointed as Lord Lieutenant in 1982.

He had also served the Queen as a member of the bodyguard, the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, which he joined in 1977. He became standard bearer in 1990 and was promoted to Lieutenant this year.

The Chairman would be representing the Council at the funeral, to be held on 10 November at Winchester Cathedral. She had also written to Lady Scott on behalf of members and officers of this Council to express sympathy.

(b) Jim Chapman

The Chairman also reported, with regret, the death after a short illness of Jim Chapman, a fitter in the workshops at Marsh Lane Depot.

All those present stood as a token of respect for Sir James Scott Bt and Jim Chapman.

(c) Peter Hyde

The Chairman announced that the Chief Executive had been re-admitted to Southampton General Hospital with a post-operative infection. On behalf of all those present she expressed best wishes for a speedy recovery.

(d) Golf Matches

The Chairman announced that the Council had been successful in their match against Christchurch Borough Council but had lost to a team from the media.

(e) X Boat Race

The Chairman reported that Ian Mackintosh and John Rainbow had represented the Council in an invitation X Boat race organised by the Royal Lyminster Yacht Club. They had joined local Pennington resident Chalky White on his boat "Lone Star" and had won the race.

(f) Quality Assurance Certificate BS5750

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Mr Mark Whiter, Public Relations Officer with National Quality Assurance. Mr Whiter presented the Chairman and Cllr Miss Rickus, Chairman of the Contract Services Committee with a Quality Assurance Certificate for New Forest Contract Services refuse collection operations. They had met the stringent requirements of BS5750, a significant first within the Authority. New Forest was the first local authority in this part of the country to have its refuse

collection service quality assured.

The Chairman congratulated the Contract Services Committee, officers of the Technical Services Directorate and particularly the refuse collection employees, who had all played a part in the team effort to secure the award.

The award also demonstrated an ongoing commitment to quality, as the service would now be independently assessed at least twice each year.

(g) Mr Joseph Collar

At the request of Cllr Burdle, the Chairman agreed to write to Mr Joseph Collar of Blackfield to congratulate him on winning the National and World Cluedo Championships.

38. LICENSING COMMITTEE.

Cllr Burnett presented the minutes of the meetings held on 29 July, 12 August and 23 September 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted:-

(a) Westwoods and Glendene Mobile Home Sites, Bashley Road, New Milton (Minute 34)

In answer to a question from Cllr Rice, members were advised that it was not appropriate to include a note of the forty-five local residents who attended this meeting in the list of officers. Cllr Rice also advised members that the local residents would have preferred the site licence conditions to refer to mobile homes rather than caravans.

(b) Guidelines Relating to Convictions (Minute 46)

Cllr Rice welcomed the further consideration given to the guidelines, following reference back from the last meeting of the Council. It was essential to be seen to be maintaining the highest possible standards for drivers. He particularly noted the requirement for three years post-conviction for a major traffic offence, and the inclusion of psychological diagnosis in respect of both alcohol and drug addiction.

Cllr Lovering was deeply concerned that someone with a conviction for a serious indecency offence could be considered for a licence after three to five years. In view of the vulnerability of some passengers he considered they should be permanently barred. He moved that the guidelines be amended to impose a permanent ban in the case of indecency offences. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Cullers.

Members were advised that once a conviction was spent, the Council should not normally take it into account. The guidelines put forward by the Licensing Committee went as far as possible within the terms of Home Office guidance. The Council would be subject to challenge if a permanent ban was imposed.

A number of members considered that a permanent ban was essential

to maintain public safety. Children were carried to school by taxi, and young women wishing to travel late at night were advised by the police to take a taxi. It was essential that they could be certain the driver was not a threat to them. If the law prevented a permanent ban it was unfair and should be challenged. The Council should impose a permanent ban and it would be up to others to challenge this through the courts. The Council should be able to set the standards that it wanted.

While sharing the concerns about the need to safeguard public safety, a number of other members were concerned about both the feasibility and the value of trying to impose a total ban. Once a conviction was spent the police would be under no obligation to reveal it. The Council would therefore be unable to guarantee the absence of convictions and might give a false sense of security through suggesting that none of the drivers licensed had ever had such a conviction. Strong advice had been given to the Licensing Committee on their lack of ability to impose a total ban.

Some members expressed the view that a legal advisor should be present at Council meetings.

Following considerable debate, Cllr Burnett indicated his willingness to take this matter back to the Committee, to allow further consideration of the guidelines in the light of additional advice on how restrictive the Council could be. He invited all members of the Council to attend the meeting.

With twenty-four members voting in favour and twenty-eight against, the amendment to impose a total ban on persons with a conviction for indecency was lost.

Cllr Hutchins moved that the matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Coles and unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted subject to Minute 46 being referred back for further consideration.

39. PLANNING COMMITTEE.

Cllr G Dawson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 11 August, 8 September and 13 October 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received and the recommendation be adopted:-

- (a) Land of Testwood Farm (Application 51505) (Minute 63)

Cllr Burdle believed that Reason 1(a) of the decision notice should refer to the South Hampshire Structure Plan. Cllr G Dawson undertook to have the information checked and corrected if appropriate.

- (b) Carvers Recreation Ground, Southampton Road, Ringwood (Application 52286) (Minute 68)

Cllr Orton spoke of considerable local opposition to proposals to build a community hall on Carvers Recreation Ground, Ringwood. This was also contrary to this Council's policies regarding public open space. He hoped the Town Council would listen to local opinion and seek to revoke the planning permission, to avoid any future threat to this land. An alternative site should be sought if there was proven need for the building.

Cllr Vernon-Jackson believed the Town Council had created the opportunity for development, should the people of Ringwood decide that this was what they wanted. He welcomed their action.

Cllr G Dawson believed the Committee had determined the application on its planning merits. Local opinion had been taken into account, and there was support as well as opposition. With respect to the loss of public open space, he expected Ringwood to benefit from additional areas in the near future.

(c) Planning Applications for Committee Decision (Minute 72)

Cllr Mrs Wilson disclosed an interest in the subject matter of this item and having left the meeting took no part in the consideration or voting.

Cllr Bailey expressed his strong opposition to proposals for sand and gravel extraction at Ashley Manor Farm, Lymington Road, New Milton (Application 50553). The site was only three quarters of a mile from the town centre and a hundred yards from the nearest house. Local residents deplored the County Council's decision to approve the application.

Cllr Vernon-Jackson welcomed the County Council's decision to reduce the amount of sand and gravel taken from the District as a whole.

(d) Horse Related Development Working Party (Minute 83)

Cllr Lovering believed the consideration of this item had become very confused and members had voted for interim guidance which had not been their intention. There was now some doubt as to what could be considered a field shelter. He moved that the recommendation be not approved and the matter be referred back for further consideration.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Mrs Errington, who had Chaired the meeting of the Working Party. She believed a wrong interpretation had been placed on the recommendations of the Working Party. The Council's policies sought to restrict the sub-division of fields and associated horse development. The new guidelines would allow two stables to be erected on each one and a half acres and would be contrary to the aim of keeping Forest fields for Forest people.

Cllr Earwicker felt that the decision had been wrongly interpreted, and believed a concrete floor was inappropriate for a field shelter, which should be temporary in nature. Cllr Miss Drake believed that an earth floor for a field shelter was warmer, softer and more hygienic. Not all horse organisations supported concrete flooring. She believed the Council's policies

should maintain the status quo pending the outcome of research being undertaken by the Forestry Commission and the New Forest Committee.

Cllr Mrs Alldridge felt that the Planning Committee's recommendations were correct, and believed a concrete floor was essential to maintain proper hygiene.

Cllr G Dawson thanked the Working Party for their work on a difficult subject. He did not support reference back. The decision taken had been based on the officers' report and he was satisfied in his own mind as to what members had voted on.

With thirty-one members voting in favour, and fewer against, the amendment was carried.

(e) Proposed A36 West Wellow By Pass (Minute 84)

Cllr Croydon disclosed an interest in this item but had a dispensation from the Department of the Environment to speak but not to vote.

Cllr G Dawson advised members that the views expressed by the Planning Committee had been subject to the proviso that, as neighbouring local authorities were more affected by the proposals, this Council's views might change in the light of their responses. The other affected local authorities had expressed the view that all the routes were environmentally unacceptable and had reserved further comment pending the carrying out of proper environmental impact assessments of the proposals. This Council's position had therefore also been reserved and a further report would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

(f) Land off Little Dene Copse, Pennington, Lymington  
(Application 52528) (Minute 88)

Cllr Scott asked on what basis the Council secured planning gain, the procedures followed and what involvement Lymington and Pennington Town Council had had in this case. He asked how much money had been secured for the benefit of the Council.

Cllr G Dawson advised that prior notice should have been given of this question, but undertook to have a written reply prepared.

(g) The Wykeham Site, Stanford Hill, Lymington (Minute 94)

Cllr Scott asked the same question in respect of this site as he had for Little Dene Copse (see above). He believed that gains from development should be sought, to benefit Lymington and Pennington, as in Totton. Cllr Vernon-Jackson pointed out that Lymington had not been developed as much as Totton and had proportionately less developers' contributions. He welcomed the efforts of the officers in securing the 10,000 contribution from this site for community use.

Cllr G Dawson again advised that prior notice should also have been given of this question. He did not believe that there could be any meaningful comparison between development in Lymington and Totton. Lymington and Pennington Town Council had been involved

in securing planning gains and he hoped that this practice would continue. One effect of this involvement, however, was that the planning gains would not show as a credit to this Council.

- (h) Arnewood School, Gore Road, New Milton (Application 52497)  
(Minute 97)

Cllrs Rice and Griffiths disclosed non-pecuniary interests in this application.

Cllr Mrs Wilson regretted the decision to refuse planning permission. There was strong local support, particularly from parents who wished to see high quality education continued on campus for sixth form students. She did not believe objections to the bulk of the building or traffic generation could be sustained in the face of the precedent set by the sports centre. The Governors and Head Teacher had been prepared to impose a ban on pupils bringing cars to school to avoid parking problems. This view was supported by Cllr Griffiths.

Cllr Coles had been on the site visit and believed that there were alternative sites for a sixth form block on the school campus. Cllr Earwicker believed the reasons for refusal were sound. The school could not guarantee to enforce a "no cars" ban on pupils in future years.

Cllr G Dawson advised members that the Committee had refused the application on sound planning grounds following a site visit. He deplored the action taken by local District Councillors to portray this as a political decision and referred to a report in the local newspaper. He recalled that, although the application had originally attracted cross-party support, following the site visit the decision to refuse had also been on a cross-party vote. The decision had been taken on the planning issues of proximity, overlooking and parking. He looked forward to receiving a future application from the school which overcame the specific objections.

- (i) Hazel Farm Development Brief (Minute 115)

Cllr Burdle recalled that planning permission had only been granted for a supermarket on Area 7, West Totton on the basis of dualling of the A326 and the construction of a grade separated junction with the Calmore link road. It was now reported that the County Council was unable to proceed and would be constructing a roundabout as a temporary measure. He questioned how temporary it would be. He believed this Council had been seriously misled and that the local community would suffer greatly as a result of traffic to the store using routes through residential areas. These views were shared by Cllr J J Dawson.

Cllr Mrs Bannister believed the Committee had been misled by the County Council but Cllr Harrison believed the County Surveyor's advice had been soundly based on an assumption that the Department of Transport would extend the present contract for the A326 to dual this section, as the original contract was well within budget. It was unfortunate that consent had not, in the event, been forthcoming. He believed that the County Surveyor had been let down by the Department of Transport.

Cllr Lovering considered the County Council was proved, by such cases, to be an unreliable and expensive tier of government. Cllr Cullers did not believe the County Surveyor had taken adequate account of the views and needs of local residents on the Waterside, and was not providing a system to keep traffic moving in and out of Totton.

Cllr G Dawson also believed that this Council had been deceived by the County Surveyor.

(j) 1994/95 Transport Policy and Programme (Minute 116)

Cllr Mrs Bannister referred to proposals for a Totton Town Centre link road. She believed that this should be subject to widespread public consultation as there was likely to be vigorous local opposition once the plans were published. The road was unlikely to be constructed in the next five to ten years and she doubted the need for it, in any event.

Cllr Burdle drew attention to slippage in the County programme and felt this Council should complain strongly that inadequate provision was being made in this District. He was supported by Cllr Griffiths, who also thanked the officers for their assistance in including a disabled assistance crossing at the A337/Barton Court Avenue junction, New Milton.

(k) Belmore Fields, Land off Belmore Lane, Lymington  
(Minute 120)

Cllr Scott questioned the procedure used by this Council for Lymington and Pennington Town Council to help negotiate for planning gain. He considered it essential that sufficient funds were secured through the further Planning Obligation to fund the provision of footpaths.

(l) Barton Green, Marine Drive East, Barton-on-Sea, New Milton  
(Application 52681) (Minute 137)

Cllr Simmons did not support this decision on the basis that Policy H9 of the Coastal Towns Local Plan was clear that more than two-storey development would not normally be permitted in this area. He believed the proposals were a subtle means of achieving three storeys. This concern was shared by Cllrs Earwicker and Rice. They considered this was too high a density development, and the landscaping should have been included within the boundaries of the site.

Cllr Lovering recalled that the density had been allowed by a previous appeal decision. The Committee was now endeavouring to negotiate for a reasonable building which would minimise damage to the surrounding countryside. Cllr Bailey, as a local member, found the development acceptable.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received, but the recommendation be not adopted and Minute 83 relating to the Horse Related Development Working Party be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.



40. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Mrs Vernon-Jackson presented the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted:-

(a) Expenditure Plan Proposals 1994/95 - 1997/98 (Minute 39)

Cllrs Griffiths and Austin deplored the increased charges for amenity car parks, particularly in Barton-on-Sea, where the cost encouraged motorists to park in surrounding roads. The present increase was too much and it would be more constructive to halve the charge.

Cllr Vernon-Jackson welcomed the increased allowance and eligibility for bus tokens, although Cllr Mrs Bannister cautioned that the allowance was extremely modest compared to the actual cost of public transport.

Cllr Mrs Vernon-Jackson advised members that the question of charging for amenity car parks would be considered again by the Committee and she invited members' comments.

(b) Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 - Experiments on Animals (Minute 50)

Cllr Miss Cooke sought strong support for this proposition. She reminded members that the question did not relate to the morality of animal experimentation, which was a separate issue. This was about enforcing the legislation to control the terms under which such experimentation took place. BUAV had undertaken undercover investigations at five different establishments and in each case had identified serious breaches. The Home Office had subsequently investigated the Wickham Research Laboratories and had substantially upheld BUAV's findings, as a consequence of which they had withdrawn the licence of the Research Director. They had established that the results of the experiments were being falsified. Whatever the views members may have on the role of animal experimentation, it could not be justified where the results were falsified and therefore of no value.

Cllr Rice agreed and expressed his distress at the suffering which was caused. He commended the bravery of the undercover investigator.

(c) Poultry Meat Inspection Service (Minute 56)

Cllr Scott hoped that the new scheme for poultry meat inspection, using the veterinary service, would be subject to quality assurance assessment. He believed that the previous system had been old-fashioned. He did not support the Committee's concerns about proposals which he considered to be due modernisation.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted.

41. LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr J J Dawson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 7 September and 10 September 1993. He advised members that the meeting on 10 September had been held at the Town Hall, Lyminster.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) St Barbe's, Lyminster: Future Use (Minute 34)

Cllrs Rice and Mrs Vernon-Jackson disclosed non-pecuniary interests in this matter but there was no discussion.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

42. HOUSING COMMITTEE.

Cllr Mrs Robinson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 14 September 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted:-

(a) Social Housing Schemes 1993/94 (Minute 56)

Cllr McGeorge expressed dismay at newspaper reports of Government proposals to reduce funding to the Housing Corporation and Housing Benefits. On a point of order, Cllr Craig requested the Chairman to confine the debate to the items on the agenda. This view was supported by Cllr Austin.

(b) Compulsory Competitive Tendering - Housing Management (Minute 65)

Cllr Scott considered that the consultant's brief should include the option of selling all Council houses. He believed this would leave a substantial net sum to build new homes in the District. He moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Griffiths.

Cllr Cullers explained that Regulations did not permit councils to use capital receipts to fund the building of new homes. Cllr Scott disputed this information on a point of order, whereupon Cllr Griffiths moved the procedural motion that the question be now put which, on being put to the vote, was agreed.

With thirteen members voting in favour and the majority against, the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted.

43. CONTRACT SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Miss Rickus presented the minutes of the meetings held on 21 September and 22 October 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

- (a) Chief Inspector Graham Rode (Minute 13)

Cllr Rice questioned the need for Chief Inspector Rode to be given permission to observe the meeting. Cllr Miss Rickus advised him that, as the majority of the meeting was held in private session, it had been necessary to give this officer, who was on secondment, permission to remain.

- (b) New Forest Contract Services - Reserve Account (Minute 19)

Cllr Miss Rickus was delighted to draw to members' attention that, once again, the excess surplus from the Contract Services reserve account would be transferred to the Authority's general reserve fund, to the benefit of council taxpayers. She congratulated the management and employees of Contract Services on the efficiency of their operation. In answer to a question from Cllr Mrs Smith, she further advised members that the trading surplus from Contract Services was paid into the reserve accounts. Once this reached a threshold level, any sums received in addition were considered as excess and, as now, transferred to the general reserve fund.

- (c) New Forest Contract Services - Future Business Strategy (Minute 24)

In answer to a question from Cllr Craig members were advised that the Stage 1 referred to in Resolution (b) was the first part of Stage 3 of the entire process.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

44. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Wade presented the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

- (a) Members' Conference Expenses (Minute 33)

Cllr Griffiths welcomed the steps taken to control expenditure on conferences and to ensure value for money. He hoped the quality of conferences/seminars would be monitored so that poor ones were not supported again. Cllr Simmons agreed and supported "on the job" training and experience.

Cllr Mrs Robinson agreed with the need to be careful in expenditure, but believed members also had a duty to be well-informed and trained. Cllr Lovering suggested that members should prepare a written report on each event, which would provide a means of monitoring quality.

- (b) Expenditure Plan Proposals 1994/95 to 1997/98 (Minute 35)

Cllr Mrs Smith disclosed an interest in respect of leased cars and having left the meeting took no part in the consideration.

Cllr Burdle considered that the report should have included a figure on the value of the leased car scheme. Cllr Wade undertook to provide an answer in writing.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

45. STRATEGIC GROWTH IN TOTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Cllr Shepherd presented the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Highway Matters (Minute 17)

Cllr Lovering drew members' attention to the County Surveyor's decision not to attend meetings of this Committee. He deplored the County Surveyor's unwillingness to listen or respond to the needs of the local community. This view was supported by Cllrs Miss Cooke and Burdle, who also questioned the County Surveyor's justification for making the pelican crossing at Ringwood Road, Totton dependent on the Totton/Ashurst cycleway. Cllr Burdle found it ludicrous that a large new community was being severed from all services such as shops and community halls by a busy and dangerous road, and there were no plans to provide a safe crossing. The poor road surface was also contributing to problems.

Cllr Greer found the County officers to be arrogant and out of touch. He hoped the County Members who also served on this Council would take this matter up. Cllrs Vernon-Jackson, J J Dawson and Cullers supported these views.

Cllr Harrison advised members that there had been some confusion as to the interplay between pelican crossings and cycle routes. The qualifying criteria for a pelican crossing were less onerous when it was associated with a cycleway. It was therefore hoped to progress a pelican crossing at Ashurst, within the 1994/95 budget, in association with the Totton/Ashurst cycleway. The Ringwood Road crossing would be constructed in conjunction with the Green Route.

Cllr Maynard believed that the County Council was being constrained by an overly restrictive budget, set by the previous administration. Services would be increased in future, but there would be a consequent rise in council tax to fund this.

Cllr Shepherd shared the concerns about County officers failing to attend meetings of the Committee. He confirmed the information given by Cllr Harrison regarding the criteria and provision of pelican crossings.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

46. EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Pearce-Smith presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

47. ADJOURNMENT AND RESUMPTION OF MEETING.

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12.40 pm and resumed at 1.30 pm.

p Cllr Mrs J K Vernon-Jackson MBE JP - Chairman

p Cllr S S Wade - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

p Mrs N E Alldridge  
p K E Austin  
p Mrs O A M Badland  
p S Bailey  
p P A Baker  
p Mrs P D Baker  
p Mrs M J Bannister  
Major C Beeton MBE  
p W E B Boothby  
E R Bowring  
p Mrs D M Brooks  
p D S Burdle  
p R J Burnett  
p J E Coles  
p Miss S A Cooke  
p D E Cracknell  
p J G Craig  
p W F Croydon  
p B A Cullers  
p G Dawson  
p J J Dawson  
p Miss P A Drake  
p B C Earwicker  
Major S S Elvery  
p Mrs L K Errington  
p L P Gibbs  
p W J Greer  
A J C Griffiths

Councillors:

p R C H Hale  
p F R Harrison  
p Mrs Y P Holloway  
p Mrs A M Howe  
p J M Hoy  
p J A G Hutchins JP  
p J Lovering  
p J Maynard  
p N D M McGeorge  
p Mrs M McLean  
p Miss G E Meaden  
p R F Orton  
p P G Pearce-Smith  
p C G Ramsden  
p A W Rice TD  
Miss G M Rickus CBE  
p Mrs M J Robinson  
p D N Scott  
p Lieut Col M J Shand  
p S A Shepherd  
p A J Simmons  
p Mrs B Smith  
p Mrs L P Snashall  
p G Spikins  
p R G Vernon-Jackson  
G H Wales  
p Mrs D Wilson  
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

N J Gibbs, D A Gurney, Mrs M Holmes, E S Johnson, I B Mackintosh, Miss J Debnam and T R Simpson.

48. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Coles presented the minutes of the meetings held on 20 October and 8 November 1993.

On the motion that the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted:-

(a) St Barbe's, Lyminster (Minute 42)

The Chairman of Council, Cllr Mrs Vernon-Jackson disclosed a pecuniary interest in this matter but had a dispensation from the Department of the Environment to speak but not to vote. Cllr Rice disclosed an interest in this matter but remained in the meeting. Following advice from the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Mjr Beeton also disclosed an interest in this matter but remained in the meeting.

Cllr Scott advised members that at both the Leisure Services and Policy and Resources Committees, evidence had been requested to support the claim that the British Red Cross had been offered the opportunity to use this building. The Red Cross, both locally and regionally, said they had not been approached. He also believed that members were being misled about the viability of a museum of the size projected, and were being pushed towards an unwise decision. He moved that the recommendation be not approved, and the matter referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Austin.

Cllrs Mrs Wilson, Pearce-Smith and Burdle also considered that information was being withheld from Councillors, and did not believe that adequate steps had been taken to allow other bodies, such as the Red Cross and St John Ambulance, the opportunity to discuss using the building. They also believed that the County Council was withdrawing their funding of 15,000 for a curator for the museum. There also appeared to be a grave lack of quality exhibits.

Cllr Vernon-Jackson believed that this issue had been well discussed on a number of occasions. The County Museum Service actively supported the application. The projections for the viability of the museum came from an independent consultant's report. He believed a combined museum and Tourist Information Centre would provide a valuable resource and service for local people.

In responding to the debate, Cllr Scott reiterated his belief that the projected visitor figures were double the realistic evaluation and that, coupled with the County Council's decision not to fund the curator, the museum was not viable. He considered St Barbe's had been an impulse purchase, for which the Council was now seeking uses, and the final cost would be much higher than members had been led to believe. He felt that other bodies had need of the building and had been denied the opportunity.

Cllr Coles thanked Cllr Mjr Beeton for his prior notice of his intention to raise this matter. He advised members that the Red Cross Divisional HQ had been approached directly by the officers in October 1992. They had been invited to, and subsequently attended, a meeting to discuss future uses of the St Barbe's site, when they had agreed to discuss the use of the smaller building with the Council's Valuer. The Red Cross had expressed no further interest after this discussion, nor responded to a

further invitation for interest in the larger building. Cllr Pearce-Smith had advised them directly of the availability of this building following the September meeting of the Leisure Services Committee, but they had failed to follow this up. In the light of this, Cllr Coles questioned their need for these premises. He advised members that the County Council was yet to decide on funding for the museum. He undertook to reply in writing to Cllr Scott's request to see correspondence relating to contacts with the Red Cross.

With seventeen members voting in favour and twenty-eight against, the amendment was lost.

- (b) Review of General Fund Revenue Expenditure 1993/94 (Minute 45)

Cllr Simmons did not agree that excess funds should be used to increase reserves but should be returned to council taxpayers.

- (c) General Fund Revenue Expenditure Plans and Budget Strategy 1994/95 (Minute 48)

Cllr Vernon-Jackson referred to the request for committees to reduce the number of meetings of their sub-committees and advised members that the Public Relations Working Party had decided to halve their number of meetings.

Cllr Coles thanked and commended all committees for their efforts in achieving savings. Cllr Lovering questioned the need for a Public Relations Working Party. Cllr Scott considered that there should be further cuts in discretionary spending and cited expenditure on recreation through the Leisure Services Committee which was 62% higher per head of population than other local authorities in the South.

- (d) Urban Waste Water Treatment (England and Wales) Regulations 1993 - Classification of the Solent (Minute 53)

Cllr Vernon-Jackson spoke of local concern, particularly from yachtsmen, at proposals to reclassify the Solent as open water. This would allow lesser standards of water quality to be applied and local people feared the consequences. It was essential to ensure that Southern Water did not degrade further the quality of water in the Solent.

Cllr Coles advised members that no further information had yet been received from the Government or Southern Water.

- (e) Review of European Parliamentary Constituencies (Minute 57)

Cllr Coles advised members that the name chosen for the European Parliamentary Constituency was "South Wiltshire and South West Hampshire".

- (f) Standing Orders as to Meetings and Proceedings - Amendments (Minute 59)

Cllr Burdle recalled the decision to separate the role of the Chairman of the Council from that of the Leader in order to take the Chairmanship out of the political arena, a move which had received cross-party support. A number of amendments had been

made to Standing Orders which members had been advised were to facilitate these changes. Changes to Standing Order 36(3) had, however, allowed the Chairman of the Council to be Chairman of a programme committee, a situation which had not existed previously and was completely contrary to the ethos of divorcing the Council's Chairmanship from politics. Not only was this causing a confusion of roles within the Council Chamber, it was also confusing to both the officers and the general public as to the division of roles, and the part being played by the Chairman at any one time. There was additional confusion about whether it should be the Chairman or the Leader of the Council who should be involved in some matters. He moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Greer.

Cllr Greer had also welcomed the division of the Chairmanship from the political role of the Authority. He believed that the Chairmanship should not be confined to the majority political group. In the past this had not been the case. He did not accept the argument that, with a narrow majority, the Chairman's casting vote was critical as it should always be used to maintain the status quo. Standing Orders could be altered to achieve this if it was the Council's aspiration.

Cllrs Lovering, Scott, Mrs Wilson, Craig, Austin, Mrs Wyeth and Mrs Bannister all expressed concern at the present situation. The Chairman of the Council was no longer above the day to day affairs of the Council and could not play the essential role of arbiter, who could be appealed to by any officer or member, and who could be relied on to be impartial. Like the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Chairman of the Council should play a non-political role, and should be the guardian of the manners, values and standards of the Authority. The Chairmanship had not previously been confined to members of the majority group.

Cllr Mrs Alldridge spoke of her regret at the increasing politicisation of the Council which had led to unfortunate things being done and said.

Cllr Vernon-Jackson considered that it was as yet early days in the division of the role of the Chairman. It was possible for the Chairman of the Council to have other responsibilities successfully, as in members being elected to more than one tier of local government. Cllr Pearce-Smith believed all members had political affiliations, but was advised by Cllr Mrs Bannister she was not associated with any political party; and by Cllr Mrs Wyeth that as an Independent she was elected to represent all the people of Lyndhurst.

In replying to the debate, Cllr Burdle recalled the previous situation where the Chairman was the Leader of the Council, but was precluded by Standing Orders from being Chairman of a programme committee. This itself maintained the Chairmanship as a non-political role. The separation was now increasingly important as the use of a group system made the chairmanship of committees more political and created an increasing predictability of decision. The Chairman or Mayor of no other nearby local authority had been Chairman of a programme committee. The Chairman should be an arbiter amongst members with a duty to take the initiative and referee in the case of



dispute.

Cllr Coles reminded members that the change to Standing Orders was recent, and throughout the long consultation exercise no member had raised this concern. The Standing Orders in some other local authorities permitted the Chairman of the Council to be Chairman of a programme committee, and in fact this had occurred in recent years in one. He believed the issue had now been well discussed and opposed reference back. He believed the majority of members in the Council Chamber were politically affiliated and to believe otherwise was naive.

With twenty members voting in favour and twenty-seven against the amendment was lost.

(g) Outside Bodies (Minute 62)

Cllr Vernon-Jackson reported that Lymington and Pennington Town Council were grateful for the opportunity to have direct representation on the Lymington Harbour Commissioners.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted.

49. NOTICE OF MOTION.

In accordance with Standing Order 7, Cllr Mrs Wilson moved the following motion, which was duly seconded:-

"This Council recognises the efforts being made by British Rail to reduce costs but urges them to ensure that changes to timetables take account of passenger needs. In particular the removal of the southbound service, which calls at Brockenhurst at around 1600 hours, should be reinstated to avoid students from Brockenhurst College having to wait for an unacceptable period at the station until the next service".

In accordance with Standing Order 7(4) the motion stood referred to the Environmental Services Committee for debate.

50. CHIEF SOLICITOR'S DELEGATED POWERS.

RESOLVED:

That the functions and powers delegated to the Chief Solicitor be also delegated to the Principal Solicitors until 23 May 1994.

51. SEALING OF DOCUMENTS.

RESOLVED:

That the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to any orders, deeds or documents necessary to give effect to any decision made at this meeting.

CHAIRMAN