

25 JULY 1994

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 25 July 1994.

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
e B A Cullers
p G Dawson
p J J Dawson
p Miss P A Drake
p B C Earwicker
p 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
e Mrs Y P Holloway
e 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
e 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
e A J Simmons
p Mrs B Smith
p Mrs L P Snashall
p G Spikins
p R G Vernon-Jackson
e G H Wales
e Mrs D Wilson
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

P A D Hyde, D A Gurney, Mrs M Holmes, E S Johnson, I B Mackintosh, Miss J Debnam, M Devine and C Gilmour.

21. MINUTES.

Cllr Scott moved that the third paragraph of Minute 15(d) should be amended by the additions of the words "Cllr Scott welcomed the opportunity for schools to choose to seek grant maintained status".

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Griffiths and was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 1994, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Minute 15(d) by the addition of the words "Cllr Scott welcomed the opportunity for schools to choose to seek grant maintained status".

22. QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS.

The Chairman advised members of the following awards which were announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Lord Shackleton of Burley, KG, OBE	Commodore Richard Thorn, CBE Chief Constable John Hoddinott, CBE
Dr Simon Stanley, OBE	Mrs Anne Powell, MBE
Trefor Williams, OBE	Mrs Dorothy Symes, MBE

All those present stood and applauded the recipients.

23. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) The Future of the New Forest Heritage Area

The Chairman advised members that on 14 July 1994 the Minister for the Environment and Countryside had announced to Parliament the Government's conclusions on its consultation document "The New Forest: The Government's Proposals".

The Chairman welcomed the strengthening of planning powers for the New Forest to make them comparable to National Parks. These changes were a firm vote of confidence for this Council's planning performance. The Chairman advised members that this Council would have to consider the best means of promoting co-operation and co-ordination between the principal agencies within the New Forest Heritage Area and how jointly they could build on the successes achieved through this Council's involvement with the New Forest Committee.

The Chairman also reported that the Minister had written to her about the boundary for the Heritage Area in the Avon Valley and the representations which he had received. The Minister would be advised that, in following the guidelines and procedures set by Government, this Council had and would be taking these issues into account. Reports would be taken to the Planning Committee on 10 August 1994 and Policy and Resources Committee on 18 October 1994 so that the matters contained in the Government's statement could be fully debated.

The Chairman reiterated this Council's commitment to play a full and active part and do all that it could to protect and conserve the New Forest Heritage Area and look after the interests of those who lived within and visited the area.

(b) The Government's Proposals for the Forestry Commission

The Chairman advised members that on 19 July 1994 the Secretary of State for Scotland had announced the Government's proposals for the future of the Forestry Commission. This Council had made representations, along with other organisations such as the Association of District Councils, opposing any change in the management of the New Forest, and stressing that public rights of access to Crown estates should be preserved.

The Government had decided that the Forestry Commission should remain in the public sector, but that Forest Enterprise should become a Next Steps agency, operating on a more commercial basis. The Government had promised improved grants to promote private forestry, and also strengthened measures to protect and promote access to Forestry land which was being sold. This Government statement would have been cause for concern if it were not for explicit assurances from the Minister that the New Forest would not be affected either with regard to ownership or management. The Forest was presently managed under the Minister's mandate, which made the conservation of the Forest's traditional character a primary objective. A report on the consultation document which would be released by the Government would be taken to the Policy and Resources Committee in due course so that more detailed consideration could be given to its implications.

24. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Wade presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 5 July 1994.

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

(a) Members Allowances - Cycles (Minute 9)

Cllrs Austin and Rice were concerned that the decision to pay a cycle allowance to members would discriminate against staff who also cycled. They were advised that allowances for staff should be considered through the Staff Consultative Committee, and had been specifically separated from the question of members' allowances.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted.

25. CONTRACT SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Miss Rickus presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 28 June 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) New Forest Contract Services General Manager's Report (Minute 12)

Cllr Miss Rickus advised members that, in the penultimate paragraph of this minute, the word "marking" should be

replaced by the word "market".

Cllr Scott asked what benefit had accrued from quality assurance auditing and what advantages had been identified in going forward with quality assurance certification on engineering works.

Cllr Miss Rickus advised members that quality assurance certification was now expected by industrial undertakings. It was as yet too soon to quantify any pay-off but there had already been a recognisable improvement in the efficiency of the service. This was believed to arise from the requirement for staff training on efficiency management. There was sufficient evidence of benefit to justify going forward with quality assurance on another service. She undertook to give a fuller reply in writing.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received subject to the amendment of the penultimate paragraph of Minute 12 by the deletion of the word "marking" and its substitution with the word "market".

26. EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Lt Col Shand presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 4 July 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Time of Meetings

Cllr Rice questioned whether there was sufficient business to justify meetings of this Committee. Cllr Lt Col Shand advised members that the Committee had considered their meetings as part of the recent cost evaluation exercise. They had concluded that it was a democratic requirement to have an Emergencies Committee, and they were holding the minimum number of meetings necessary.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

27. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Mrs Smith presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 2 June 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Health Commission Reforms and Initiatives (Minute 10)

Cllr Mrs Bannister noted that the Director of Policy and Performance Measurement with the Southampton and South West Hampshire Health Commission had stated that there had been a significant reduction in hospital waiting times. She disagreed with the statement and referred to the distress and pain caused by the overnight closure of X-ray departments, which meant that people attending Accident and

Emergency departments overnight had to come back in the morning when they experienced very long waits.

- (b) New Road Car Park, Hythe - Proposal for New Library (Minute 16)

Cllr Mrs Robinson disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in the subject matter of this item, but there being no debate, did not leave the meeting.

- (c) Budgetary Control for Committees (Minute 18)

Cllr Scott questioned whether the variation in capital expenditure had been a credit or deficit, and asked what corrective action was being taken. He considered such statements should always be included in the minutes.

Cllr Mrs Smith advised members that the variation was caused by a transfer of capital expenditure between 1993/1994 and 1994/95. The Chairman of the Council explained further that the money was for coast protection works which had been carried forward into 1994/95. There was no need for such explanations, on each variation, to be included in the minutes.

- (d) St Mary's Cemetery, Fordingbridge (Minute 19)

Cllr Craig asked whether this Council had bought St Mary's cemetery.

Cllr Mrs Smith advised members that she would have liked notice of this question and would have to give an answer in writing.

- (e) Recycling of Glass - Contamination of Material (Minute 20)

Cllr Burdle was surprised that there had been only a marginal improvement in the quality of glass, as the Council were now employing an inspector.

Cllr Austin considered that manufacturers of glass which did not conform with the brown, green or clear classifications, should be encouraged to re-use their bottles through a deposit system.

Cllr Mrs Smith advised members that two loads of glass had been lost through contamination prior to the employment of the inspector, at a cost of 1,000 per load. No loads had been lost since the inspector had been employed. With respect to the colour of glass, she advised members that the bottle banks were clearly marked for colour. Manufacturers of non-conforming glass had been approached to suggest that they either remove the labelling which said the bottle could be re-cycled, or they switched to a re-cyclable container.

- (f) Residents' Parking - Lymington (Minute 22)

Cllr Mrs Bannister recalled the long period of time it had taken to introduce residents parking in Wellands Road, Lyndhurst.

Cllr Griffiths believed that residents in Barton-on-Sea were suffering from holiday makers parking in local roads to avoid the car parking charges.

(g) Hurst Spit Stabilisation Scheme (Minute 25)

Cllr Major Beeton asked whether the shingle being used on Hurst Spit was being dredged from the Keyhaven River or the shingle bank. He recalled that there had been significant expenditure on Hurst Spit since December, partly because the small size shingle washed away. He urged that a more permanent solution should be found.

Cllr Mrs Smith advised members that the gravel was being dredged from the shingle bank as the aggregate was of the correct size. This was a further interim repair, and she hoped that consent would soon be received for a more permanent solution.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

28. HOUSING COMMITTEE.

Cllr Mrs Robinson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 27 June 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Compulsory Competitive Tendering - Housing Management (Minute 13)

Cllr Scott asked what the abortive costs had been for the work on Voluntary Competitive Tendering.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that she would have needed notice of that question and undertook to have a written reply prepared.

(b) Grant to Tenants/Residents Associations (Minute 14)

Cllrs Austin, Scott and Burdle questioned the degree to which tenants' associations were subsidised by this Council and also what percentage of eligible tenants belonged to the tenants' associations.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that this Council had been giving grants to residents associations for twelve years as part of the programme to encourage their establishment, to aid the consultation process. The 50 grant now given was to cover their start-up costs. The grant was paid from the Housing Revenue account and did not fall on the Council Taxpayer. With respect to Cllr Scott's question on the percentage of membership of tenants' associations, a written answer had already been promised to him following the Committee meeting.

(c) Tenants' Newsletter (Minute 16)

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

Cllr Griffiths referred to the letter which had been sent to tenants asking for their support in the Council's bid for unitary authority status. He asked for the cost of production and of postage.

Cllrs Lovering and Austin suggested there should be a selection process to maintain a reasonable standard for the articles published in the tenants' newsletter. This would be better than increasing the size of the publication.

Cllr Mrs Bannister reminded members that this was the tenants' newsletter, and its aim was to encourage tenants to join in. This made it difficult to edit their submissions. As the Council was encouraging them to submit articles, more space was needed.

Cllr Harrison assured members that there would be vigilance to make sure the articles accepted were of adequate quality. It was, however, important to have enough space to give adequate coverage of tenants' views. He undertook to supply a written answer on the cost of the letter on unitary authority status.

(d) Land Acquisition (Minute 18)

Cllr Major Beeton advised members that the Ministry of Defence was establishing a Housing Trust to control and renovate MoD married quarters. He questioned whether they would be able to fulfil their obligations if district councils were given apparently surplus land at reduced prices. Cllr Lt Col Shand pointed out that not all MoD land was associated with major installations.

Cllr Scott questioned the geographical allocation of monies for the purchase of land to provide housing.

Cllr Greer considered that the County Council should be included in the list of organisations who should be exempted from seeking the best possible price for land, in order that local authorities could buy it to provide housing.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that the implications of the MoD Housing Trust were not yet known but she was confident that there was land available which could benefit both local and MoD people. It was now clear that nothing would be available at Marchwood for the time being. With respect to the geographical allocation of monies, the money to be spent in the Hythe and Dibden area arose from the sale of the Dibden Bottom Farm site. The other funds were to be used in the west of the District to redress the balance. She was happy to accept that the County Council should be included in the list of bodies for whom this Council was seeking exemption.

(e) Customer Pledges (Minute 19)

Cllr Scott did not support the housing pledges as one did not include a commitment to seek all types of tenure. He moved that this item be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Austin.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that the pledge in question was designed to cater for people in acute housing need, and was a separate issue. The Committee was already committed to looking for all types of tenure.

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

(f) Housing Project Control Sub-Committee (Minute 20)

Cllr Burdle believed that any housing development which was permitted in a rural community under the exceptions policy should be constructed to a high standard and be sympathetic to its surroundings. He rejected the concept that Planning Committee should be asked to take into account the effect that a good quality design would have on rents and Council Tax bands. This was not a planning issue, but would be an attempt at social engineering. He moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Greer.

Some members held the view that the design advice and standards being applied to rural exceptions schemes were unreasonable. It was accepted that there should be a good quality of design, but purely cosmetic features, such as false chimneys, added unreasonably to the building costs, and subsequently to the rents which had to be charged.

There was some discussion on the role of appeals to the Valuation Officer to have the Council Tax band reduced for council and housing association properties in rural areas.

Other members considered that the needs of existing residents in rural communities should be taken into account. Open green areas were valuable to them. Any building under the exceptions policy should be of a high standard and fit into the community. In addition, the Planning Committee had a number of issues which had to be taken into account when determining such applications, and it was not reasonable to ask them to give weight to one aspect, which was not a relevant planning consideration.

Some members suggested that a disagreement of view between the Housing and Planning Committees was inevitable. The correct forum to reach a corporate view was the Housing Project Control Sub-Committee, which included members from both Committees.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that the Housing Project Control Sub-Committee had recognised the need to maintain high standards for rural exceptions developments. They believed, however, that there were consequences arising from the high design standards, and these should be taken into account. Unnecessary requirements added unreasonably to

costs and to rents. She knew of no cases where the Council Tax band of a council house had been appealed. This could be pursued further through the officers. Housing associations in this area were believed to be pursuing appeals on Council Tax bands.

With thirteen members voting in favour and a greater number against, the amendment was lost.

(g) Requests for Early Retirement (Minute 25)

Cllr Craig believed that the minute should include the numbers of the posts which were considered.

Cllr Mrs Robinson advised members that the minute would be amended by the Housing Committee at their next meeting. She was happy to assure members that the post numbers had been included in the original recommendation and all the relevant information had been available in reaching this decision.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

29. LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr J J Dawson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 31 May 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Grant Aid Application (Minute 7)

Cllr Mrs Robinson disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application for Calshot Sailing Club but there being no discussion did not leave the meeting.

(b) Lymington Recreation Centre - Phase 2 (Minute 10)

Cllr Scott did not believe that the customer survey had been properly carried out or the findings correctly analysed. He also believed that in pursuing an indoor bowling centre in the New Forest District, this Council was going back on a promise to provide a club in Lymington, after Phase I of the sports centre.

Members generally supported the need to provide an indoor bowling rink. There had been an initial promise that this should be provided in Lymington, and greatest priority should be given to finding a site in this town. Other members noted, however, that there was no room on the school campus for a bowling club, and it had not been possible to identify another site in the town. People would travel for an indoor bowls club and it would still be valuable to the people of Lymington to provide this facility elsewhere in the District.

Some members questioned the need for a creche to be provided as part of Phase 2, but others felt that it would be used.

Cllr J J Dawson advised members that he was satisfied that the survey had been properly carried out and the findings correctly analysed. He recalled that the first phases of sports centres had been promoted in Lymington and Totton at the same time, both using school sites. The latest development in Lymington would only bring their services up to the level already achieved in Totton. He also recognised the demand for an indoor bowls club, but confirmed that, with extra building for the school on this campus, there was no room for bowls with the existing sports centre. Phase 2 would be an exciting proposal for Lymington, which had received preferential treatment in the capital expenditure programme to allow it to progress.

(c) Land at Ashley, New Milton (Minute 12)

Cllr Mjr Elvery reiterated the continuing concern felt by local people regarding the proposed sale of land at Ashley. He asked whether the Leader of the Council had written to the Leader of Hampshire County Council on this matter. Cllr Coles confirmed that he would be writing shortly.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

30. LICENSING COMMITTEE.

Cllr Burnett presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 26 May 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

31. PLANNING COMMITTEE.

Cllr G Dawson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May, 8 June and 13 July 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Chairman's Announcements - Jousting (Minute 32)

Cllr Miss Rickus thanked the Planning, Licensing and Environmental Health Officers who had worked so effectively to bring an end to the jousting at Holmsley. These efforts had been noted by local people, who had made appreciative comments to her. She hoped that other members would endorse those thanks.

Cllr Lovering believed this was an excellent example of the good results which could be achieved where the Council acted firmly, and hoped that this would be remembered as the model for responding to such breaches of control in future.

(b) Dibden Purlieu Farm (Sector 3) Development Brief (Minute 36)

Cllr Rice referred to the public participant who had attended the June meeting of the Committee to talk on this topic. There had been some confusion and he had not attended the July debate on the Development Brief. The public participant did not feel that his views had been taken into account when members had debated the brief, or that there had been sufficient public consultation. In view of this, and also of Cllr Rice's belief that this Authority should not be selling all its land for development, but should be retaining more for wildlife, he moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Austin who believed that small wild areas provided a valuable space for young people to play in.

Cllr Mrs Bannister and Burdle believed that this area was rich in wildlife and local people would not wish to see it developed. This Council had already recouped the purchase cost of the land. The rest should be retained for nature conservation.

Cllr G Dawson drew members' attention to the notes of the June public participation period which made it plain that the member of the public had been advised that this matter would be debated at the July meeting. The Chairman had also personally invited him to contact the Clerk of Hythe and Dibden Parish Council to arrange to attend that Council's debate on this issue. He was sorry if there had been some subsequent misunderstanding. With respect to the content of the Development Brief, there would be large residual open areas for play, which linked to open spaces in the first two phases of the scheme. He agreed that the area was rich in wildlife, but local people were making such observations on all phases of the Dibden Farm development. The Hampshire Wildlife Trust had given clear advice that Sector 3 had no exceptional wildlife value. He reminded members that this land was allocated for development in the New Forest District (East) Local Plan, although the local members had always objected. This Development Brief merely updated one which already formed part of the Plan. The New Forest District (East) Local Plan had been subject to extensive public consultation and examination.

With sixteen members voting in favour and eighteen voting against the amendment was lost.

- (c) Land at Fernhill Lane/Hollands Wood Drive, New Milton
(Application 54338) (Minute 39)

Cllr Rice asked what form the publicity for the proposals to provide low density social housing would take.

Cllr Scott did not believe that it was appropriate to specify that the social housing would be at low density, but should be at an appropriate, if necessary high, density to meet the needs of local people. He moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Griffiths.

Other members noted the need for social housing schemes to have a good quality environment and recalled that, in any event, this site was owned by the County Council. It was not open to this Authority to dictate a high density.

Cllr G Dawson confirmed that this site belonged to the County Council. He also believed that a low density scheme was appropriate for this site. If every site was filled with the maximum possible number of houses it would lead to a poor quality environment.

Cllr G Dawson undertook to advise Cllr Rice in writing of the form that the publicity for the scheme would take, but he recalled that the debate had highlighted the need to involve local members.

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

- (d) Land of Sandy Balls Estate, Godshill, Fordingbridge (Application 54445) (Minute 40)

Cllr Lovering expressed his disquiet about activities at Sandy Balls. The last mountain bike event had been held when the planning application to legitimise the use had been submitted only two days before the event. The next event was already being advertised in spite of this refusal. He hoped that every action would be taken to prevent this event taking place.

Cllr G Dawson was confident that rigorous action would be taken by this Authority. Although there was merit in mountain bike events held at other venues, this was the wrong place and had proved very damaging to the environment of the Heritage Area and to the amenities of local residents.

- (e) Land off Tavells Lane, Marchwood (Application 54474) (Minute 46)

Cllr Major Beeton questioned how service families were generating local housing need in the Parish of Marchwood.

Cllr G Dawson drew members' attention to the section of the Minute which made it clear that service personnel were marrying into local families. When they subsequently came out of the armed forces this Authority was required to meet their housing needs. In view of this he felt that it was sad that this Authority could not persuade the Ministry of Defence to work with it, to meet the needs of all the community.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

32. STRATEGIC GROWTH IN TOTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Cllr Shepherd presented the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 1994.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

- (a) Totton Western Bypass, Stage III (Minute 14)

Cllr Burdle expressed his dissatisfaction that Stage III of the bypass had been completed ahead of schedule, but would not be open to the public because of the construction of the supermarket and its associated roundabout.

Cllr Harrison confirmed that, although the road had been completed, it was safer to construct the roundabout with the road closed. The opening had, therefore, been put back, but would be at about the time which had originally been projected. This information was confirmed by Cllr Shepherd.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

33. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Coles presented the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May and 6 July 1994, subject to the amendment of Minute 7(1) by its division into Part (a) which included the first two sentences and Part (b) which contained the remainder of the recommendation.

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

- (a) Time of Meetings (Minute 4)

Cllr Harrison referred to the earlier debate about the need to continue with meetings of the Emergencies Committee. He sought confirmation that all the Committee meetings held on 23 May had been of a similar short length. Cllr Coles confirmed that this was so.

- (b) Local Government Review (Minute 7(1))

At the suggestion of the Chairman, and in view of the amendment which had been moved by Cllr Coles, the two parts of this recommendation were debated separately. Minute 7(1)(a) read "That this Council is concerned at the report from the Local Government Commission that it considers, as its first option, retaining the existing two-tier structure for the New Forest District Council area. This Council urges all effort to be made to ensure that unitary status is given to the New Forest District."

Cllrs Mrs Errington, Mrs Bannister, Maynard, Rice and Scott opposed the bid for unitary status for the New Forest. They had concluded that some services, such as education, libraries and social services, needed to be operated over a larger geographical area and required specialist staff to operate efficiently. Introducing a unitary authority for this area would cause chaos and lack of continuity of service as officers had to come to grips with unfamiliar subjects. The public were largely indifferent about who provided their services. They needed to know who to contact with their problems, but this could be achieved through a

good information technology system. There was a danger that local government inefficiency during the transitional period would allow the Government to remove further powers, increasing the role of quangos. There was no proven justification for seeking unitary authority status for this District.

Some members cited poor provision of secondary education as an example of ineffective management by the County Council, but were advised that the County Council was no longer responsible for the provision of places, which was now under the control of the Funding Agency for Schools, a Government quango.

Other members had believed that there was unanimous support for this Council's bid for unitary status and were surprised at the views being expressed in favour of retaining the status quo. They believed that this District overwhelmingly met the criteria to become a unitary authority. With respect to size, population, resources and community identity, this area had a better claim than many where unitary authority status had been recommended by the Commission. These members supported the need for services to be provided efficiently, for decisions to be taken locally and to be directly accountable to local people. They believed that this Council should be looking forward for the best way to serve its people and protect the Forest. If the Commission's recommendations were accepted, this area would be surrounded by powerful unitary authorities, who would inevitably squeeze the Forest if it had less power and status.

In particular, Cllr Greer deplored the lack of vision which failed to see the potential for a new unitary authority for the New Forest. Some services would have to be provided through joint arrangements, but effective procedures would be developed. Local people wanted powers to be exercised locally. This would prevent undesirable decisions being imposed from outside. He recalled the large increase in the County Council's precept for this year and looked forward to greater efficiency through a unitary authority. He reminded members that people would retain their identification with the County of Hampshire. The County structure would be unchanged. Only the County Council would go if unitary authorities were introduced across Hampshire.

Cllr Mrs Robinson proposed and Cllr Lovering seconded that the question be now put which, on being put to the vote, was carried.

Cllr Coles expressed his disappointment at some of the views now being put forward by members. This District had produced the second highest number of responses to the Local Government Commission, which indicated that local people were interested in who ran their services. The District Councils in Hampshire had worked together through the Branch ADC. This was the first County to seek a solution which could be put forward to the Commission. The other Districts had been extremely confident that this area would become a unitary authority based on its present boundaries and they

now shared this Council's disappointment. The battle was not, however, over. Together with Cllr Greer, Leader of the Conservative Group, he had met the Local Government Commissioner the previous week and put further facts to him. There may yet be a unitary authority for the New Forest. Even if the Commission accepted unitary status for the New Forest, there would be a residual County Council covering over one million people. Cllr Coles doubted, however, that a patchwork of arrangements, leaving a large residual County in the south, surrounded by unitary authorities, would be workable, or supported by the Government. Cllr Coles also expressed his concern at the County Council's misrepresentation of the cost of a New Forest Unitary Authority.

With thirty-five members voting in favour and fewer against, the recommendation was adopted.

Members then debated the recommendation that "(b) This Council regrets that, in considering the reform of local government, the Government has no plans to establish elected regional authorities to undertake the consultative activities currently done by bodies such as SERPLAN and also believes the Government should help publicise and strengthen the activities of the Committee of the Regions in the European Union, established by the treaty of Maastricht."

Cllr McGeorge advised members that the Maastricht Treaty established the Committee of the Regions. The intention was to increase the concept of subsidiarity and to promote regional identity and voice. The Committee was appointed from the elected Councillors and was achieving greater credibility and standing than previous non-elected bodies. There was a danger, however, that this Country's representatives could be unelected. Cllr McGeorge drew members' attention to the many topics which were, or should be, planned and provided on a regional basis. The work of the Sports Council and SERPLAN, DoE housing grants, transport and higher education could all become the responsibility of regional government. This would increase electoral control and counteract the present tendency for the imposition of quangos.

Cllr Craig could envisage a role for regional government, but considered that any such suggestion to Government should be carefully thought out. If the scope and powers of the regional authority were not specified in the response, the Government could impose whatever it liked, and say that it had local government support. He thought it would be better to consider regional government once unitary authorities were established and working, when the potential regional role could be seen. He expected that regional groupings would have to be flexible to meet the needs of various purposes.

Cllr Austin opposed the imposition of a further tier of government. Cllr Lovering cautioned that the new unitary authorities would only have the powers that central government permitted them, as this country did not operate on a federal system.

Cllrs Miss Cooke and Harrison supported the need for regional government, particularly as unitary authorities became established. Regional government would take its powers from the centre, not encroach on local democracy, thereby empowering people to influence decisions. There was a significant danger that the Government would replace the joint working arrangements between unitary authorities with quangos, if there was no regional government to take strategic decisions.

Cllr R G Vernon-Jackson moved and Cllr Mrs Bannister seconded that the question be now put. With twenty-one members voting in favour and twenty against, the motion was carried.

With twenty-six members voting in favour and a fewer number voting against, recommendation (b) was carried.

(c) Local Government Review - The Future Local Government of Hampshire (Minute 7(2))

Cllr Burdle expressed his surprise at the recommendation put forward by the Local Government Commission. He believed the case for a New Forest Unitary Authority was overwhelming. Only thirteen county councils had been recommended to continue. This area would be surrounded by unitary authorities. He hoped that when the Commission re-examined this Council's case in the light of the further information he had been given, he would then support a New Forest Unitary Authority. He deplored some of the misinformation being circulated by the County Council, which he felt should be refuted more directly. He was surprised that the County Council had not even recognised the case for unitary authorities for Portsmouth or Southampton. He believed the County Council had been proved not to work and that it was wrong for people from some distance away to take decisions which affected peoples' lives. Cllr J J Dawson reminded members that, no matter how locally decisions were taken, the perception was always that outsiders were unduly involved.

(d) Financial Recommendations of Committees

Cllr Mrs Robinson disclosed a pecuniary interest in respect of the "Round the Houses" Tenants' Newsletter. She also apologised to members that she had forgotten this interest at the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. She was now aware that she should have disclosed the interest and left the meeting. There being no discussion on this occasion, she did not leave the meeting.

(e) Times of Meetings (Minute 20)

Cllr Croydon was surprised that only four members had voted in favour of evening meetings. He also refuted the implication that members who had a full-time job or business could not carry out the role of a District Councillor.

(f) Hunting (Minute 21)

Cllr Craig moved that this recommendation be amended to the effect that it solely rescinded the resolution of Minute 62 of the meeting held on 10 January 1994 insofar as it related to the hunting of wild animals with dogs. He did not support the payment of 500 to Somerset County Council for them to appeal against the High Court ruling preventing them from banning hunting on their land. He considered that this was a Parliamentary issue and not the legitimate concern of this Authority.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Burdle who considered that, as this Council had no land which was hunted over, it was not legitimate to make a contribution to Somerset County Council's costs. He opposed hunting, but it was the issue of responsibility which was relevant here. This view was supported by Cllrs Greer and Austin.

Cllrs Miss Cooke and Boothby considered that it was appropriate to contribute to the cost of the appeal as Somerset County Council would be establishing the principle on behalf of all local authorities. In answer to a question from Cllr Mrs Baker, Cllr Coles advised members that the 500 would only be payable if Somerset County Council lost the appeal. He also considered that Somerset County Council was establishing a principle on behalf of other local authorities and the money would be well spent.

With fourteen members voting in favour and a greater number against, the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted, subject to the amendment of Minute 7(1) by the division of the recommendation into parts (a) and (b), as set out above.

34. QUESTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.

In accordance with Standing Order 9, Cllr Hale asked the following question of the Chairman of the Central Services Committee:-

"As Chairman of the Central Services Committee you will remember that, at the Council Meeting on 28 February this year, there was a long debate on the issue of members' allowances. During that debate some members made statements and you may wish to consider the following quotes which appeared in the local press:-

'Cllr Griffiths declared: 'I have on many occasions objected to the increases that Councillors vote themselves. I think people in this country are very cynical about politicians, and if we vote to raise the allowances we pay ourselves we will be reinforcing that cynical belief and they will be right to have this view.' He concluded with his "snouts in the trough" allegation.

'Cllr Lovering: 'We have European recession, world trade difficulties and we are pressing to increase our allowances for the last year of this Council's life. We should take the moral high ground...'

'Cllr Wilson: 'I came to this Council to serve. I thought we all did. We didn't come for the money. I came because I care about my environment and the community. The long and the short of this is it's a voluntary business we are in. We are not money grabbers and I don't want to see us go down that road'

Cllr Rice said it was a matter of principle and the first ten years that he was a member they were not paid at all. 'I am not going to sell my soul for 3%'.

At the end of the debate a recorded vote was taken on an amendment that members' allowances should be frozen. In giving you notice of this question, I asked you to refer to the list of those voting for the amendment, therefore voting against the increase. Can you please say which of those members are now accepting that increase?

Bearing in mind the statements that I have brought to your attention today, will you take steps to bring to the attention of those members who voted for this amendment that there is an "opt out" facility within the members' allowances scheme?"

Cllr Wade, as Chairman of the Central Services Committee replied as follows:-

"Thank you for giving me good notice of this question, which has given me the opportunity to have the answer researched. I can confirm that all members of this Council are receiving the basic allowances at the new rate. With respect to the opt-out facility in the allowances scheme, to allow members to claim a lower rate, this has not really been brought to members' attention so far. If it is members' wish, I would be happy to arrange for an advice note to be sent out."

In a supplementary question, Cllr Hale asked that, when the members' allowances scheme was reviewed, it should be transparent, in order that Councillors' actions could be clearly seen and interpreted.

35. NOTICE OF MOTION.

In accordance with Standing Order 7, Cllr Harrison moved the following motion:-

"That Council:

1. Notes that some non-magisterial members of the new Police Authorities are to be appointed, not elected, and that members of the public have been invited to apply to become 'independent' members of the new Authorities;
2. Learns with dismay that District Councillors are not eligible to be appointed to the Police Authority in this way, so that those who have shown that they have the support of their electors are specifically disqualified;
3. Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary, calling on Her Majesty's Government to revert to a democratic way of selecting all the

non-magisterial members of the new Police Authorities, and to send copies of his letter to the Members of Parliament for the New Forest and for Romsey and Waterside.'

The motion was seconded by Cllr McGeorge. In accordance with Standing Order 7(4) the Chairman decided that this matter should be debated at this meeting and not referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for debate.

Cllr Harrison advised members that the legislation to give effect to the new style of Police Authority had received Royal assent. He believed, nonetheless, that there was still time to prevent the implementation of the new structure. The Clerk to the Magistrates had confirmed that the first meetings of the shadow authorities would be held in October or November this year. It was on this basis that he had asked the Chairman to allow the motion to be debated at this meeting, to allow some response to be made by this Authority. Police Authorities presently drew two thirds of their membership from elected County Councillors, with one third of the members being appointed from the Magistrates. Although the magisterial members were not democratically elected, they had a valuable role to play and did have strong links with their local communities. Under the new arrangements, only nine of the seventeen Police Authority members in Hampshire would be elected County Councillors. The Magistrates' representation would be halved, to only three members. The remaining five members would be appointed by the Secretary of State, giving the Home Secretary direct influence over a substantial proportion of the membership. This was particularly disturbing in the light of the selection procedure being used. Advertisements had been placed in the press inviting people to apply to become an appointed member of the Police Authority. District Councillors, who were elected to represent their local communities, were specifically barred from applying. It seemed ludicrous that the one group, who actually had an electoral mandate, should be excluded. He believed strongly that this was anti-democratic and that anyone who purported to represent the community should be elected by that community.

With twenty-two members voting in favour and two against, the motion was carried.

36. CASUAL VACANCIES.

It was noted that Cllr Scott had resigned from the Central Services and Housing Committees, Cllr Hoy from the Policy and Resources Committee and Cllr Mrs Wilson from the Environmental Services Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments be made to fill casual vacancies on Committees:-

Central Services Committee	- Cllr J M Hoy
Environmental Services Committee	- Cllr D N Scott
Housing Committee	- Cllr Mrs D Wilson

Policy and Resources Committee - Cllr D N Scott.

37. 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 decisions made at this meeting.

CHAIRMAN