

6 NOVEMBER 1995

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on 6 November 1995.

p Cllr S S Wade - Chairman
p Cllr Miss S A Cooke - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

p K E Austin
p Mrs O A M Badland
p S Bailey
p P A Baker
p Mrs P D Baker
p Major C Beeton MBE
p Mrs C A Bianchi
p E R Bowring
p D S Burdle
p J E Coles
p M R Cox
p D E Cracknell
p W F Croydon
p B D Dash
p G Dawson
p J J Dawson
p Miss P A Drake
p K W Drew
p B C Earwicker
p A S Emery
p Mrs L K Errington
p R K Goodridge
p W J Greer
p R C H Hale
p L E Harris
p D Harrison
p F R Harrison
p S A Hayes

Councillors:

p Mrs A M Howe
p J M Hoy
p J A G Hutchins JP
p M R Jones
p M J Kendal
p G N D Locock
p Mrs B M Maynard
p N D M McGeorge
p Mrs M McLean
p S M Noel
p R F Orton
p P G Pearce-Smith
p C G Ramsden
p A W Rice TD
p B Rickman
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 Mrs B Smith
p Mrs L P Snashall
p G Spikins
p Mrs J K Vernon-Jackson MBE JP
p M S Wade
p Dr M N Whitehead
p Mrs D Wilson
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

I B Mackintosh, N J Gibbs, D A Gurney, E S Johnson, Miss J Debnam, Mrs J Livesey, T R Simpson and G Tombs

31. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 31 July and 27 September 1995, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

32. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a)BTEC Certificate in Management

The Chairman congratulated the following members of staff on completing the BTEC Certificate in

Management. All had been awarded the Certificate in Management Studies and many had also been awarded a college certificate in recognition of their outstanding achievement.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Steve Aplin | Steve Mitchell |
| Paul Augustus | Vicky Orchard |
| Richard Bruton | Ed Pooley |
| Paula Freeland | Nick Tabor |
| David Wise | |

(b)Chairman's Ball

The Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Chairman's Ball on 13 October 1995. The evening had been a great success and the tombola had raised 229.90 for the Wessex Children's Hospice Appeal.

(c)Former Cllr Colin Bladen

The Chairman formally advised members of the death of former Cllr Colin Bladen who had represented the Brockenhurst ward from 1987 until 1989.

(d)Robin Mathias

The Chairman also advised members of the death of Robin Mathias who had been senior shop steward in New Forest Contract Services. The Chairman recalled his willingness to express the point of view of the workforce and to argue strongly for any cause he believed in. He had made a significant contribution to the successful industrial relations which the Council had enjoyed in recent years.

All those present stood in silent tribute to Colin Bladen and Robin Mathias.

33. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Coles presented Minute 57 of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 18 October 1995 and moved that the minute be received and the recommendations be adopted.

On the motion the minute be received, Cllr Burdle believed that proposed Standing Order 12 (5b) was unduly restrictive and would not allow Members to comment on resolved items. He believed that it was the legitimate role of Councillors to comment on the Council's business, and that traditionally Members had been able to do so. He moved that Standing Order 12 (5b) be amended to allow resolved items to be debated.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Austin.

Cllrs Errington and F R Harrison suggested that the County Council's rules for debate should be assessed to see if they would be appropriate in this Authority. Cllr Hale spoke against amending Standing Orders lightly without giving proper consideration to the wider effects

of any changes.

This view is supported by Cllr Coles, who believed that amendments to Standing Orders required detailed debate in Committee. He advised members that there would be an overall review of Standing Orders in the near future which would give them the opportunity to discuss the rules which they considered did not work. In the meantime, proposed Standing Order 12 (5b) represented no change on the existing rules for debate, but these had not previously been properly enforced.

With 24 members voting in favour and 31 against, the amendment was lost.

With 31 members voting in favour and 21 against it was:

RESOLVED:

That minute 57 be received and the recommendations be adopted.

34. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr McGeorge presented the minutes of the meetings held on 21 July and 26 September 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

35. LICENSING COMMITTEE

Cllr D Harrison presented the minutes of the meetings held on 27 July and 5 October 1995, with the exception of minute 16 which had been dealt with by the Council at their meeting on 31 July 1995 (Minute 27 refers).

On the motion that the minutes be received.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

36. HOUSING COMMITTEE.

Cllr Robinson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 4 August and 6 September 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

- (a) White Paper on Housing "Our Future Homes" -
(Minute 26)

Cllr Kendal questioned the reason behind the response that the period for which landlords could evict

Shorthold Assured Tenants for rent arrears should not be reduced from six months to two months. He did not accept the comment that benefit payments were higher in respect of the private sector than the public sector. He also believed that it was appropriate to take into account whether a family was based on a married couple when determining housing allocations.

Cllr Rice believed that the Council were campaigning against the disposal of government property at discounted values.

Cllrs Earwicker and Dash did not believe that it was appropriate to discriminate in favour of families based on a married couple. This discriminated against single parent families who may already, through no fault of their own, be disadvantaged. It was important to concentrate on the needs of the children. Nor was it appropriate to judge that only married couples enjoyed a stable relationship and were able to offer proper care and support in bringing up their children. There was a need for a home for every family, regardless of their lifestyle.

Cllr Robinson advised members that it could take a number of weeks to calculate benefit payments, partly because of delays in getting information back from the applicants. This should not put the applicant's home in jeopardy and this had therefore been included in the response to government as an area of concern. With respect to the relative amount of support given to private and public sector tenants, she believed that public sector tenants received less support as they paid towards these benefits through both their taxes and their rents. With respect to the judgement on housing applicants taking a responsible approach to family life, the Committee had believed that decisions on housing allocation should be taken on the merits of the case and on housing needs. It was necessary to take due regard of the needs of the children. Finally, the comment relating to property disposal by government agencies reflected the need to encourage them to sell the land for social housing at a discounted value to meet local housing needs.

(b) Improving Standards in Houses in Multiple Occupation
(Minute 40)

Cllr Kendal questioned why the Committee had sought the licensing of houses in multiple occupation when the government had already said that they believed that there were adequate controls through existing legislation.

Cllr Robinson advised members that the Committee had been aware of the government's view but had disagreed that there were adequate controls already in existence.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

37. PLANNING COMMITTEE.

Cllr G Dawson presented the minutes of the meetings held on 9 August, 13 September and 11 October 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Items for visiting Councillors (Minute 55(b))

Cllr Rice asked that the items for which visiting Councillors attended the Planning Committee should be dealt with well before the lunch break.

Cllr G Dawson believed that it was better to start taking items out of order at 12 noon as at present, but would ask the Planning Committee Advisory Working Party to consider this question further.

(b) Report by Local Government Ombudsman Number 94/B/1479 (Minute 80)

Cllr Wilson was concerned that an increasing number of planning appeals were being referred to the Ombudsman. She asked the Chairman of the Planning Committee to examine whether anything was going wrong with the system and if action needed to be taken to remedy the situation.

Cllr G Dawson advised members that of the two recent Ombudsman's cases, one had had an extensive history over a period in excess of 10 years. It was inevitable that reports of one finding of maladministration by the Ombudsman would prompt other aggrieved parties to pursue such action. Cllr G Dawson reassured members that the Planning Committee continued to take their duties seriously and to use their powers strongly.

(c) Hampshire County Structure Plan Review (Minute 113)

Cllr Burdle asked that the land which was commonly being referred to as being to the north of Totton should more accurately reflect that it fell within the parish of Netley Marsh.

Cllr G Dawson advised members that he was well aware of the local concerns about this land and hoped that the County Planning and Transportation Committee would also recognise local opinion. He believed that it was correct to refer to this land as being within Netley Marsh, to the north of Totton.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

38. STRATEGIC GROWTH IN TOTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Cllr Shepherd presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

39. LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr J J Dawson presented the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Public Participation Period (Minute 24)

Cllr J J Dawson drew members' attention to the constructive presentation which had been made to the Committee during the public participation period.

(b) Netley Marsh Play Area: Use of Developers' Contributions (Minute 28)

Cllr Orton did not understand how the Strategic Growth in Totton Advisory Committee, which was purely advisory in nature, had swayed the Leisure Services Committee to reverse their earlier decision to fund work to this play area from developers' contributions. He moved that this matter be referred back for further consideration.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Austin.

Members noted that much of the development at North Totton was on land which had originally fallen within the Parish of Netley Marsh, but the boundary had been moved by the Boundary Commission.

Some members recalled that the Leisure Services Committee had originally decided to support this application, subject to the concurrence of the Strategic Growth in Totton Advisory Committee. That Committee was unable to give its support because of the terms under which developers' contributions were collected. The legal advice about the constraints on the use of developers' contributions had subsequently been considered by the Leisure Services Committee. The developers could challenge for the return of the money if it was not being used for the purpose for which it was collected. It was hoped that the Leisure Services Committee would grant aid work to this playground, through their normal budgets.

Other members believed that the playground was used by people from West Totton and disputed the legal advice that the playground was not eligible for assistance from developers' contributions. They

considered that the playground was equally as eligible as the Colbury Village Hall, which had received grant aid. They believed that the sum involved was trifling compared with the amount of developers' contributions being held and could be taken from the interest accruing.

Cllr J J Dawson advised members that the Leisure Services Committee had taken their decision not to grant aid this work reluctantly on the basis of the legal advice. There was no evidence to substantiate the claim that the playground was used by people from West Totton. Indeed there were play areas, provided by Totton and Eling Town Council and Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council without grant aid from developer's contributions, which were closer to the development and more likely to be used. He believed that there was evidence that Colbury Village Hall was extensively used by the residents of West Totton and a distinction could be made. He hoped that the Parish Council would be assisted through normal channels

With 25 members in favour and a greater number against the amendment was lost.

- (c) Calmore Multi-Sports Centre: Use of Developers' Contributions (Minute 29)

Cllrs J J Dawson, Emery, F R Harrison and Snashall disclosed non pecuniary interests in the subject matter of this item.

In answer to a question from Cllr Orton, Cllr J J Dawson advised members that it was lawful to fund work on the Calmore Multi-Sports Centre from developers' contributions. The sports centre was on the edge of the West Totton Development whose residents accounted for one third of the usage.

- (d) Fernhill Lane, New Milton: Design (Minute 30)

Note: Cllr Wilson disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in this item.

In answer to a question from Cllr Wilson, Cllr J J Dawson agreed that the resolution should be amended by the deletion of the word "creation" and its substitution with the word "design".

- (e) New Forest and Romsey Community Bus (Minute 35)

Cllr Rice believed that it would be more cost effective to put this money toward a more permanent solution than a community bus.

Cllr J J Dawson advised members that the bus was provided by the County Council who also sponsored the service. The Community Bus Scheme was valued in rural communities and had been supported by this Council for a number of years.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received subject to the amendment of the resolution to minute 30 by the deletion of the word "creation" and its substitution with the word "design".

40. BUSINESS SERVICES CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

Cllr Cox presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

41. DIRECT SERVICES CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

Cllr Rickus presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

(a) Building Cleaning (Minute 18)

Cllr Rickus drew members attention to the Department of the Environments' decision, having considered the apparent loss on the cleaning contract, not to take action under their Section 13 Notice. They had determined that there was an anomaly in the way the figures were presented and in fact no money had been lost.

(b) New Forest Contract Services General Managers Report (Minute 21)

In answer to a question from Cllr Kendal, Cllr Rickus advised members that the Committee were aware that Good Friday was a holy day. The Committee were not however able to influence when collections were made, but Cllr Rickus undertook to pass this request to the Chairman of the Environmental Services Committee who determined the specification.

RESOLVED.

That the minutes be received.

42. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Smith presented the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 1995.

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

(a) Citizens Charter Customer Pledges 1996 (Minute 49)

In answer to a question from Cllr Kendal, Cllr Smith advised members that the compensation payment to householders whose refuse was not collected within one working day of them complaining that they had been missed on the normal collection day was paid directly by the Client Inspector who visited the household to assess the complaint. The householder signed a receipt for the money. This was a cost effective system. Cllr Smith further advised members that a compensation payment had been paid on only two occasions in the last year which she believed reflected the good quality of service.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted.

43. EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE:

Cllr Shand presented the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 1995.

On the motion that the minutes be received:-

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received.

44. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

Cllr Coles presented the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 1995, with the exception of minute 57 which was dealt with earlier in the meeting (Minute 38 refers).

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

(a) Proposed Extension of Car Parking Charges (Minute 40)

Cllr Dash moved that the recommendation be amended as follows:-

"That the people of the New Forest be consulted on a full range of proposals for an extension of car parking charges and such consultation shall include information on alternative means of reducing net expenditure should the need arise".

The Governments calculation of rate support grant assumed that the Council gained income from car parking charges. This left the practical issue of how to balance the budget without this income. He believed that it was important the public were consulted properly, including an explanation of the allowance of two free hours car parking, and setting out other options, such as reductions in services, as

an alternative was of balancing the budget. The public could then express an informed preference for the option to be followed. Cllr Dash emphasised that all members were committed to ensuring that people were not discouraged from shopping in town centres.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Rickus.

A number of members considered that the consultation exercise was unnecessary as large numbers of local residents were already expressing their opposition to car parking charges through signing petitions, a number of which had been presented to the Chairman of the Council prior to the meeting. The subsidy to car parking was relatively modest at 2.77 per head of population. The potential income would be small relative to the cost of providing and maintaining the machinery and also employing staff to supervise them. There was a danger that car parking charges would encourage people to park on verges and out in the Forest rather than pay the fee, particularly in the Forest villages. There was also a significant danger that Town Centres, which were already suffering from strong competition from out of town centres, would be further damaged. Two hours was not enough to do the shopping and also have coffee or lunch. The town centres would therefore become less attractive relative to the out of town centres which offered free parking. They also considered that Councillors were elected to take such decisions, and also that the introduction of car parking charges was already seen as a fait accompli, and the consultation exercise was therefore of no relevance.

Other members believed that the public had a right to express a view on this important issue. Much of the expenditure under the Environmental Services Committee's budget was mandatory with very few options to achieve other savings. It was government policy that there should be a charge for car parking. There was also now a requirement for greater recycling, but no additional funding had been provided by government to meet the costs. Other potential service cuts had been considered in the past and rejected. Some of these members opposed the introduction of car parking charges but believed that a public consultation exercise was the correct way forward. The petitions, while an expression of public opinion, only reflected one side of the argument, and other people should be encouraged to express a view. Also, the consultation exercise would address wider issues than car parking alone, which had been the only subject of the petitions.

Following a lengthy debate Cllr Vernon-Jackson moved the procedural motion that the question be now put, which on being put to the vote was carried with 33 members voting in favour and fewer against.

In replying to the debate, Cllr Dash believed that the question revolved about whether a consultation

exercise was needed. He believed that local people had a right to a full and clear explanation of the options and to express a view. Cllr Coles welcomed the full debate that this issue had received. He believed that local people should be given the opportunity to see the facts and express an opinion. The consultation period would last until the middle of February 1996.

Cllr Greer requested that this matter be determined by recorded vote and in accordance with Standing Order 15 more than 15 other members stood in their places to indicate their support.

The vote on Cllr Dash's amendment was taken as follows:-

| For | Against | Abstain |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| P A Baker | Austin | Cracknell |
| Mrs P D Baker | Badland | McClellan |
| Coles | Bailey | |
| Cooke | Beeton | |
| Cox | Bianchi | |
| Croydon | Bowring | |
| Dash | Burdle | |
| G Dawson | Drake | |
| J J Dawson | Drew | |
| Earwicker | Errington | |
| Emery | Goodridge | |
| Hale | Greer | |
| Harris | Hayes | |
| D Harrison | Hutchins | |
| F R Harrison | Jones | |
| Howe | Kendal | |
| Locock | Noel | |
| Maynard | Orton | |
| McGeorge | Ramsden | |
| Pearce-Smith | Rice | |
| Rickus | Rickman | |
| Robinson | Scott | |
| Shand | Spikins | |
| Shepherd | Wilson | |
| Smith | Wyeth | |
| Snashall | | |
| Vernon-Jackson | | |
| M S Wade | | |
| S S Wade | | |
| Whitehead | | |

With 30 members voting in favour 25 against and 2 abstentions the amendment was carried. The matter was then taken to the substantive vote and was carried.

- (b) Voluntary and Charitable Organisations Sub-Committee
- 26 September 1995 (Minute 41)

Cllr Pearce-Smith disclosed a pecuniary interest in the grant for the Solent Sea Rescue Organisation. There being no discussion he did not leave the

meeting.

- (c) Review of the Committee's Capital Programme 1995/96 and Expenditure Plans 1996/97 to 1999/2000 (Minute 45)

Cllr Kendal asked whether the current edition of District News would be withdrawn in favour of a special edition for the public consultation exercise on car-parking charges.

Cllr Burdle questioned why the article in District News on the County Structure Plan did not mention that the proposed 850 additional houses would be in Netley Marsh, nor did the article include any comments from him although it had quoted some Totton Councillors.

Cllr F R Harrison assured Cllr Burdle that Totton had no wish to take this land from Netley Marsh and hoped that the differentiation between Totton and Netley Marsh would continue so that if the development did take place the Parish of Netley Marsh would get the benefits as well as the disadvantages.

Cllr Coles advised members that he had apologised to Cllr Burdle about his omission from the article in District News. He also advised members that it was not possible to withdraw the present issue of the District News.

- (d) Terms of Reference - Emergencies Committee (Minute 59)

Cllr Vernon-Jackson pointed out that annexes 2 and 3 relating to minutes 58 and 59 respectively had been reversed.

- (e) Meetings 1996/97 (Minute 62)

In answer to a question from Cllr Kendal, Cllr Coles advised members that the Council would be considering starting its meetings in the evening.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received and the recommendations be adopted, subject of the amendment of minute 40, as set out above.

45. CASUAL VACANCY - STRATEGIC GROWTH IN TOTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

This item was withdrawn

46. QUESTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.

In accordance with Standing Order number 9, Cllr Wilson asked the following question:-

"What are the cost benefits to this Council of large scale voluntary transfer and would the current administration provide detailed figures to back up its response".

Councillor Mrs Robinson, as Chairman of Housing Committee answered as follows:

"This Council has determined not to follow the L.S.V.T route. Consequently, a fully costed appraisal has not been undertaken. The cost benefits of L.S.V.T have been based upon the experience gained by the 40 authorities who have so far disposed of their stock.

Stock disposal of 500 or more dwellings to a single organisation requires Secretary of State approval, even if it is proposed to dispose of stock over a 5 year period. Applications must be submitted by 10 November in the financial year preceding the year of disposal. Consequently this authority could not apply to dispose of the HRA stock before 1997/98. Individual disposals are limited to 5,000 properties. The Department of Environment has regard to the estimated cost of the proposals relative to the resources available in the public expenditure survey.

Tenants' consultation is also a key element of any L.S.V.T transfer arrangements. The estimated cost of tenant consultation and the ballot is in the region of 100,000. Experience has shown that it usually takes between 18 and 22 months from the initial decision to pursue L.S.V.T to completion.

It should also be noted that this Council is currently making arrangements to let a 5 year housing management contract to commence in April 1996.

Any stock disposal has to be approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment and must follow certain procedures. Assuming a disposal value of 9,000 per dwelling, which is consistent with the average price per dwelling of transfers to date, the gross capital receipt would be 55m. From this the Council would need to meet the disposal cost of 2m and a benefit levy of 4m (this is an amount prescribed by the Department of the Environment to partially offset the additional cost of the government grant towards rent allowances paid to the tenants of the housing association). Of the remaining 49m, 37m (75%) has to be set aside.

This would leave the Council 12m to reinvest in new capital schemes.

The Council must set aside 75% of the net capital receipt, which may either be retained in the Council's accounts or be used to repay outstanding debt. If the Council actually repays the outstanding debt, then any set aside capital receipts, in excess of the amount required to repay debt may be used to fund new capital investment. However, legislation specifically states that the excess set aside capital receipts cannot be used

to fund Housing Association schemes. Based upon the financial position at 31 March 1995, taking into account the outstanding loan debt of 58m, it is estimated that the Council would be able to use a further 2m to fund other capital schemes from excess set aside capital receipts.

However, in repaying the outstanding debt the Council would incur a penalty estimated at 5m. This penalty exceeds the additional spending power from set aside capital and therefore would not be cost effective. The Council's advisors suggest a set aside margin of 10m would mean the premature repayment would be worthwhile. What cannot be evaluated at this stage is the impact upon the Council's Credit Approvals awarded by the Department of the Environment for annual capital expenditure as in determining these allocations assumptions are made regarding capital receipts.

Furthermore, stock transfer would mean that tenants currently in receipt of rent rebates, which are an HRA charge, would receive rent allowances, which are borne in part by the Council taxpayer. After allowing for government grant the annual cost to the general fund is estimated as 700,000 plus the additional administration associated with raising, processing and posting cheques. This is an annual cost for which there is currently no adjustment in the SSA. Therefore, by spending up to SSA the Council would need to find savings of 700,000 each year to match the additional cost of rent allowances.

Stock transfer also means that the Council would lose control over the level of rents levied. If the housing stock was transferred and rent charged to tenants increased the additional cost of rent allowances borne by the Council taxpayer would also increase.

In summary, disposing of the Council's housing stock would generate a capital receipt. It is estimated this would provide the Council with a one off sum of approximately 12m to fund new capital schemes. However, there would be additional annual costs to the general fund of 700,000 to meet the cost of rent allowances paid to tenants of former HRA dwellings. Therefore the one-off gain in capital spending resources is offset after a few years by the additional cost of housing benefits.

Rent allowances are paid on statutory scales and as this Council is already close to its standard spending assessment the additional cost of benefits could only be funded by making budget savings or increasing income generation on discretionary budget heads.

This is the second time in recent months that I have replied formally to members questions on L.S.V.T. This answer provides more extensive information than my previous one and I hope fully assures members that under the present circumstances there is nothing to be gained from pursuing this option.

Furthermore, continued debate on this issue is very unsettling to tenants, who by and large have no wish to change their landlord. I respect that wish as I am sure the majority of members do and so I hope that we can now put the question of L.S.V.T behind us".

Cllr Wilson asked as a supplementary question whether the tenants had been advised that if the housing stock was the subject of an L.S.V.T they would have no rent increases for 5 years whereas it was projected that rents would rise by 48.7% if they remained with the Council.

Cllr Robinson advised members that this had not been raised with tenants as they had made it clear that they did not want to follow this option. She also questioned the validity of the projected rise in rents. The officers made a limited projection for next year's rents but there were sufficient unknown factors that this was an inexact science and could not be projected forward for subsequent years. She reported that she had received a letter from the tenants' representatives expressing extreme concern that the Council may consider an L.S.V.T.

47. NOTICES OF MOTION.

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

"That the Council writes to the Prime Minister, local Members of Parliament, the Member of the European Parliament and the French Government to:-

- (a) Deplore the recent decision by the French Government to carry out new nuclear tests in the South Pacific which damage the fragile eco-systems throughout the world including the historic landscapes of the New Forest;
- (b) Advise them of our belief that French plans for nuclear tests will hinder progress towards a full test ban Treaty;
- (c) Note that the British Government has so far failed to condemn the French decision or rule out the possibility of similar tests by this country and the Council therefore urge Central Government to:-
 - (1) Condemn the French Government's decision to carry out nuclear weapon tests;
 - (2) Press the French Government to abandon their nuclear test plans and;
 - (3) Guarantee that there will be no new British weapons tests".

The motion was seconded by Cllr Maynard.

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (4) the Chairman considered that it was conclusive to the despatch of the

Council's business to debate the matter at this meeting. Cllr Cooke reminded members that events far away from this District could have a significant effect of the atmosphere and therefore the environment. Aerosol propellents released in the northern hemisphere were destroying ozone over the Antarctic - while the eruption of Mount St Helens had affected the weather in this country. Nuclear testing in the South Pacific could therefore have a harmful effect on the people and environment of the New Forest.

It would not be acceptable to developing countries for France to sign a test ban treaty after they had carried out these tests. In addition, the test results, because of the technical characteristics of the test site, would be of poor quality and supply little unique information. The French Government were gaining support for their actions from the British Government, which she deplored.

Cllrs Beeton and Kendal opposed any increase in nuclear or chemical testing, but believed that it would be unwise to allow other countries to develop more advanced weapons than ours. Cllr Kendal also questioned the stance on nuclear tests by China. He believed that the possession of nuclear weapons by the United States and this country had stopped major confrontations for the last 45 years. He believed France had the right to test, and had chosen an area where they would cause no harm. Sunspot activity would have a greater effect on the atmosphere than nuclear tests.

A number of members expressed concern that it was easy to ignore the effects of increased nuclear radiation, as it was an unseen danger but it nonetheless did matter. There had been an increase in the incidence of leukaemia in Australia and New Zealand following previous French nuclear tests in the Pacific. It was difficult to sustain an argument for better deterrent weapons when there were already enough to destroy the world several times over. Indeed, there had been war in some part of the world, including Europe, ever since the end of the last world war. Over the past ten years arms negotiations had achieved a reduction in the number of weapons held by the super powers. The French desire for bigger bombs could not be justified when people should be working towards peace.

In replying to the debate, Cllr Cooke deplored the nuclear testing in China, but did not believe that they were open to influence as France might be. She re-emphasised the danger posed by nucleotides entering the atmosphere and therefore into human bodies.

With 33 members voting in favour of the motion, 8 against and 12 abstentions, the motion was carried.

Note: Cllrs Austin, Beeton, Kendal and Scott voted against the motion.

RESOLVED:

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