

17 MARCH 1997

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL/SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
LIAISON MEETING**

Present:

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

- Cllr J E Coles - Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee and Leader of the Council (in the Chair)
- Cllr P Baker - Deputy Chairman of Planning and Transportation Committee
- Cllr W J Greer - Leader, Conservative Group
- Mr I B Mackintosh - Managing Director
- Ms E Malcolm - Director of Environment Services
- Mr J Ward - Environment Services
- Mr P Thompson - Committee Administrator

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

- Cllr J Arnold - Leader of the Council
- Cllr E Read - Chair of Leisure Committee
- Cllr J Bridle - Chair of Education Committee
- Mr J Cairns - Chief Executive
- Ms H Merrifield - Assistant Chief Executive
- Mr D Marlow - Executive Director of Leisure and City Services

Apologies:

were received from Cllr Miss S A Cooke (Chairman of the Council), New Forest District Council.

1. NOTES.

The notes of the last meeting, held on 7 November 1995, were agreed as a correct record.

2. WASTE MANAGEMENT ISSUES.

The City Council referred to the difficulties they had with the County's plans for an anaerobic digester. They had accepted that the cost of the digester would be above early estimates but in addition, the proposed Marchwood incinerator would not be reduced in size. The level of recycling undertaken by the City Council had been criticised as being too low but they had been unable to progress with this issue as they needed to know what type of materials the digester would consume. However, now this had become clarified, the City Council would be able to plan public education and to increase the rate of recycling. Nevertheless, this would not affect the Hampshire Waste Services Plans. In any event, the decision would lead to a reduction in waste transported to the Marchwood incinerator.

The City Council were to inherit the waste contract in a further two weeks, although it had to be recognised that the Contract terms were not of their choosing. It could be supplemented in future.

In answer to a question from New Forest Members, Southampton City Council confirmed that revenue support for waste disposal would continue to be provided by Hampshire County Council. This was based on a commitment that a percentage of Hampshire's waste would be anaerobic and the plant had been located in Southampton. The City Council also supported the barge transfer of non-green material to Marchwood, although the initial costings were not encouraging. In respect of the proposals replacing the geothermal heat sources, the likely benefits were limited. A district system could use such sources but would only create enough power to supply a limited area.

The City Council enquired whether a planning application for the Marchwood Incinerator had been received from the County Council. New Forest confirmed that no application had been received at this stage and waste material was going directly to landfill at the moment. The Somerley Site was reaching capacity and Efford had little spare capacity. Whilst New Forest had supported the County's general strategy, their stance relating to any Planning Application had not been finalised. It was certainly true that most local people would be against the siting of any waste material plant near their homes.

The Chairman referred to New Forest Recycling Scheme which had been extremely successful, although current financial constraints meant that it was not possible to extend it to the rest of the District. He said that the City Council would be very welcome to discuss recycling strategies with New Forest's Officers.

3. PORT EXPANSION PLANS.

Cllr Arnold referred to recent meetings the City Council had held with English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Both had presented impressive, professional long-term strategic views. Both had met Associated British Ports to discuss their expansion plans. The City Council was awaiting English Nature's input until they took a formal position on the matter. Dialogue would continue with ABP who had continued to impress the City Council with their arguments on the concept of a "hub port". The City Council intended to raise with the Labour Party front benches the need to revive coastal traffic within Britain and to use the existing facilities at other ports such as Liverpool and Newcastle. However, New Forest expressed the view that for the transport industry, road traffic remained the cheapest option, although it was recognised that increased coastal shipping would reduce pollution and road congestion.

Mr Mackintosh noted Southampton's position but stated that the District Council had not yet seen ABP's proposal.

Southampton stated that they believed that the possibilities for the City and the region of becoming a hub port were significant and could be very desirable, provided the environmental impact could be minimised. They were also of the opinion that a national transport policy was required although the current government would not countenance the drawing up of such a strategy.

New Forest were not certain that, in the long-term, Southampton could sustain port facilities of the size proposed by ABP.

New Forest confirmed that there had been no recent dialogue with ABP. Officers felt that a co-ordinated approach between New Forest, Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council would be the best way of dealing with any proposals for the port expansion plan.

4. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP FOR THE SOUTH COAST.

Cllr Arnold expressed the view that local authorities needed to co-operate and needed to be pro-active in establishing a regional organisation. This was particularly important in the view of the movement towards Scottish and Welsh Parliaments and bearing in mind the voluntary organisations established in the Northern, Yorkshire and Midlands regions. At the moment, it seemed likely that there would be room for an organisation based on the South-East of England, excluding London, although the size and diverse nature of such an area would be likely to work against its success. However, there was a strong economic grouping in South-Hampshire and Dorset which had been born out by Newcastle University research on economic regions in England. This "South Coast Economic Area" crossed the existing County boundaries.

There were two obvious ways to respond to the need to involve both Councils in regional groupings. The first was a purely economic partnership or, secondly, a regional association. He believed that there were several strengths in the former approach, whilst the latter was unlikely to inspire much interest.

Both the Government and the Opposition expected Councils to work together with their neighbours and partners in higher education for economic development purposes. The existing South-Coast Marketing Company needed to attract major economic players and he proposed that this be formalised into a South-Hampshire economic partnership. The Port Director at Southampton was keen to work with the Council and it was hoped to establish a forum for economic issues very soon. This approach would allow a united front to be presented to the Government and to the regional office of the Department of the Environment. It would also put the Local Authorities in the forefront of general economic planning. As a body, it would be distinct from the South-East Regional Association, although it was recognised that a basis in economic partnership could develop into a regional body. Local universities and Chambers of Commerce were also anxious to proceed along this basis.

Cllr Coles noted the points raised but confirmed that the District Council had not yet discussed the matter. Mr Mackintosh believed that a South Central Region (or sub-region) based on the existing Metropole would only be viable if all the local authorities within the area were unitary authorities. He did not believe that Government would accept regions which split individual Counties between regions. Action in any discussions had taken place over membership of the Metropole. He agreed with the City Council's representatives that links into the Bournemouth and Poole area were much more important than the East Sussex and Kent.

The City Council representatives reiterated that they were interested in starting with a less formal Economic Partnership, which would mean that cross-county boundary discussions should not be ruled out. Broadly speaking, the economic partnership would consist of those authorities sited along the coast from Weymouth in the west, Chichester in the east and Winchester and Salisbury forming a northern boundary.

The discussion concluded with both sides agreeing to meet to discuss the issue further. Southampton City Council also confirmed that they would be consulting with neighbouring authorities once they had achieved unitary status with effect from April 1997 and would be pleased to continue the fruitful dialogue with New Forest.

5. SOUTHAMPTON UNEMPLOYED CENTRE.

Cllr Arnold referred to the Southampton Unemployed Centre which was an advice centre which had provided an advocacy and advice service on employment issues for some 10 years. The City Council continued to fund the Centre and Eastleigh District Council also made a contribution. A number of clients were also attracted from Totton, Lymington and the Waterside areas of the New Forest. The Centre was located in Woolston and had a good record of providing good advice to unemployed people.

He agreed to make a request in writing to New Forest for some financial contribution which would recognise the work done for clients from their area.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

Southampton City Council were to approach New Forest with possible dates for the next meeting.