

REPORT OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

(Meetings held 28 September and 13 October 1999)

1. FINAL ACCOUNTS 1998/99 (REPORT A – 28/9/99) (MINUTE NO. 48)

The Account and Audit Regulations 1996 require local authorities formally to adopt their Statements of Accounts, Income and Expenditure Accounts and Balance Sheets within six months of the end of the period to which they relate. This Council's Final Accounts need to be published by 31 December 1999.

The Consolidated Final Accounts for the year 1998/99 have been adopted, subject to audit.

2. DIBDEN BAY PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR (REPORT A – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 50)

The Committee has considered proposals to appoint a Project Co-Ordinator to assist and support Council officers in co-ordinating work on likely proposals from Associated British Ports for the development of Dibden Bay for port use.

The role of the proposed post-holder will include liaison within the District Council and with relevant external bodies including Hampshire County Council.

Details of the proposed post need to be finalised and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the Leader of the main Opposition Group have been given delegated authority to finalise the appointment, with a view to filling the post urgently.

3. BUDGETARY CONTROL AND COMMITTEE BUDGET REVIEW FOR GENERAL FUND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 1999/2000 (REPORT B – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 51)

The Committee has considered a report summarising the forecast variations of all Committees from the original estimates for 1999/2000, as approved by Council in February 1999.

Forecast levels of expenditure for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Expenditure were included.

The current forecast levels of expenditure for the current year were noted. The forecast variations in respect of the General Fund amount to a net saving of £173,000 from the original budget of £15.960M. The Housing Revenue Account's forecast variations amounted to a net additional expenditure of £25,000 on the original estimated expenditure of £21.8M. The Housing Capital Expenditure forecasts an increase of £537,000, due to renovation grant schemes (£137,000) and social housing grant scheme (£400,000). As far as the Other Services Capital Expenditure is concerned, there is a forecast increase of £207,000, which reflects the re-phasing of existing schemes and new schemes which have been identified during the current expenditure plans review.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE PLANS 1999/2000 TO 2003/2004 (REPORT C – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 52)

Members have considered Expenditure Plans relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The proposals assumed that the ownership of the Housing Stock remained with the Council. Quantifiable bids exceeded savings, which was a position which could not be maintained in the longer term. The effect of the Government's announcement of housing subsidy capital, credit approvals and capital financing costs associated with the credit approvals was likely to have a major impact on the HRA. Because it was too early to assess the impact of these factors, it would be necessary to review the HRA as a whole when the announcements are made in December. Any further significant savings could only be achieved, if required, by reducing expenditure on works to Council dwellings.

Accordingly, it is:-

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the Expenditure Plans for the Housing Revenue Account, attached as Appendix 1 hereto, including the bids and savings identified for 2000/01, be approved; and**
- (b) That the Guest Room charges in Sheltered Housing Schemes be increased from £5-60 to £5-70 per night.**

5. FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND EXPENDITURE PLANS 2000/2001 TO 2003/2004 (REPORT E – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 54)

The Committee reviewed the Council's Capital Expenditure for Other Services and General Fund Revenue Expenditure Plans and Financial Strategy.

The forecast General Fund Revenue Expenditure for 2000/2001 is only £112,000 above the target set by Policy and Resources Committee. The forecast overspend against this Committee's targets for 2001/2002 will need to be addressed when the Government announces its finance settlement for Local Government in early December. Some of the forecast General Fund Expenditure above target expenditure may have to be financed from the general reserve. The future forecast expenditure levels will have to take into consideration the Council's decisions on the possible transfer of the Housing Stock, which may have significant corporate financial implications.

All savings and bids for 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 should be accepted by the Council and included in the revised 1999/2000 and original 2000/2001 budgets. Any savings for 1999/2000 should be transferred to the general reserve or used as additional provision for financing capital expenditure.

Policy and Resources Committee will be able to reconsider the budget position for 2000/2001 when the Standard Spending Assessments (SSA's) and revenue support grant levels are known and the detailed budgets have been drafted.

The Committee also considered the level of capital expenditure bids in conjunction with estimated resources available. Bids for 1999/2000 had to be approved in order that these could be actioned during the current year.

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee set out proposed priorities for the Council's direction over the course of the next four years.

It was proposed that basic services should continue to be run at a high standard throughout the Council and that large scale expenditure on Information Technology (amounting to £3m over the four year period) be embarked upon. The principle behind this was to expand the concept of "electronic governance" to ensure that problems experienced by visitors to any of the Council's offices could be resolved immediately by electronic means. This programme would be undertaken on a phased basis.

The Council would also consider ways of actively encouraging the participation of Town and Parish Councils in the determination of priorities, in order to ensure an efficient and cohesive local government strategy for the New Forest.

Reference had been made to "actual" expenditure over several years, rather than "budget" income and expenditure. This had led to the view that there were sufficient funds in place for the various strands of the new Council strategy.

During discussion on the report, the following views were expressed:

- A member referred to the imposition of a £5 removal charge for the collection of bulky items of waste and was reassured that the situation would be reviewed after a period of six months of operation. It was also noted that people on benefit would not have to pay the £5 charge for each collection.
- Attention was drawn to the series of reductions and removals of grants to arts bodies.
- The Chairman of the Environmental Services and Licensing Committee requested the Policy and Resources Committee to exclude the cost of the extension of the Source Separated Collection scheme from any future requirements to match bids by savings.
- Reference was also made to the proposal to retain the Housing Advice service in-house, following the ending of the current contract with Shelter.
- Mention was also made of the proposals to allow the continued provision of sunbeds within Recreation Centres, rather than to adhere to the previously-determined phased withdrawal of such services.

It was:-

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the 2000/01 General Fund Budget be prepared on the basis of including all expenditure bids and savings as shown in Appendix 2 to this report (Annex 3 to Report E to the Committee);***
- (b) That the 1999/2000 General Fund bids and savings as also shown in Appendix 2 to this report be approved (Annex 3 to Report E to the Committee be approve);***
- (c) That a decision on setting the overall budget level for 2000/01 be deferred until the implications of that year's financial settlement is known;***

- (d) That the revenue provision for capital expenditure be adjusted and/or transfers made from the General Fund to the General Reserve for 1999/00 and 2000/01 to ensure that the General Fund net expenditure matches the agreed budget levels for each year;*
- (e) That the 1999/00 Other Services capital expenditure bids as shown in Appendix 3 (Annex 4 to Report E to the Committee be approved);*
- (f) That the 2000/01 Other Services (excluding coastal protection) capital expenditure budget be prepared on the basis of including all bids as also shown in Appendix 3 (Annex 4 to Report E to the Committee); and*
- (g) That it be noted that the present policy of using appropriate leasing arrangements within the Council's overall financial strategy remains unchanged.*

6. PREMATURE REPAYMENT OF DEBT (REPORT H – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 57)

Members were informed of initiatives being considered to reduce the cost to the General Fund of interest payments on debt. Interest rates were kept under constant review to ensure that all opportunities to reschedule or prematurely repay debts which would prove advantageous to the Council would be considered. Regular advice from external treasury management consultants supported the Council's officers in making such decisions.

Advice is that, as interest rates continue to reduce, net charges to the General Fund will increase and, thus, some outstanding debts should be repaid to optimise the Council's financial position.

For these reasons, the repayment of external loan debt of up to £10m from externally-invested funds has been approved, where such repayments prove advantageous to the Council.

7. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FINANCE – A SINGLE CAPITAL POT (REPORT I – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 58)

Proposals for a "Single Capital Pot" – a cross service allocation for most of Central Government's support to Councils - were included in the White Paper "Modernising Local Government-In Touch with the People". Further details have now emerged of how the new system would work.

The allocation will be partly made on a needs-based formula and partly by assessing the Council's services and corporate strategies, in line with Best Value principles.

The implications of the Single Capital Pot regime have been noted.

8. BEACON COUNCIL APPLICATION (REPORT J – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 59)

The Committee has noted with pleasure a report which updated them on progress of the Council's Beacon Council application in respect of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration, as well as its role as a key partner in the application submitted by Hampshire County Council relating to sustainable development – dealing with waste (Project Integra).

Both applications have progressed to the final shortlist stage of 65 applications. This was seen by the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils as a significant achievement in itself.

It is anticipated that some 40 final Beacon awards will be made.

9. MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT (REPORT K – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 60)

The Committee has decided to establish a Working Party to consider various issues arising from the Government's modernising agenda. These include the need to adopt new democratic structures and ways of engaging the public more effectively in the affairs of the Council.

The Working Party will consist of 8 members (5 Conservative and 3 Liberal Democrat appointees) and will be called the Modernisation Working Party. It will report back to Policy and Resources Committee once its deliberations are completed, with a view to ensuring that the new structures required are able to be implemented from the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2000.

10. VOLUNTARY AND CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE – 24 SEPTEMBER 1999 (REPORT L – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 62)

Policy and Resources Committee have approved various large grants recommended by the Voluntary and Charitable Organisations Sub-Committee for 2000/01. These are as follows:-

- (a) Citizens Advice Bureaux - £149,750, apportioned to the 5 Citizens Advice Bureaux across the District;
- (b) New Forest Voluntary Services Council – £68,405; and
- (c) Annual Grants
 - (i) Relate (Southampton Marriage Guidance) - £1,620
 - (ii) Solent Sea Rescue Organisation - £3,470

11. MEETINGS 1999/2000 (REPORT M – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 63)

The Committee has considered suggestions for changes to the current calendar of meetings. The reasons for the changes had arisen since the calendar was originally published.

Hythe and Dibden Parish Council objected to further changes to the calendar and this was taken into account by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED:

That the following changes be made to the calendar of meetings for 1999/2000:-

<i>Committee/Council</i>	<i>Current Date</i>	<i>Proposed Date</i>
<i>Council</i>	<i>Tuesday, 4 January 2000</i>	<i>Monday, 10 January 2000</i>
<i>Planning and Transportation Committee</i>	<i>Wednesday, 16 February 2000</i>	<i>Wednesday, 2 February 2000</i>
<i>Policy and Resources Committee</i>	<i>Wednesday, 2 February 2000</i>	<i>Wednesday, 16 February 2000</i>

12. MEETINGS 2000/2001 (REPORT N) – 13/10/99 (MINUTE NO. 64)

The Committee has considered a schedule of proposed meeting dates for the Council and its main committees from May 2000 to May 2001.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of meetings for 2000/2001 attached at Appendix 4 be approved.

13. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION – GENERAL ASSEMBLY (REPORT P – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 67)

The Local Government Association (LGA) has invited all member authorities to submit motions to its General Assembly.

Policy and Resources Committee has decided to submit motions concerning:-

- (a) The problem of light pollution; and
- (b) The numbers of houses proposed to be built within the South Eastern Region.

However, acceptance of these motions by the LGA is dependent upon whether the Association has already expressed views on the subject matter.

14. YEAR 2000 – OPERATIONAL COVER (REPORT Q – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 68)

Members have considered operational cover required over the Christmas and Millennium period, including estimated costs. An overall budget of £27,000 was established for Year 2000 as corporate contributions to operational cover and equipment hire and purchase.

Recreation Centres, Dibden Golf Centre and the Catering Direct Services Organisation will continue to operate their existing local agreement over the period 25 December 1999 to January 2000 inclusive.

A further report on the actual cost of the revised arrangements will be presented to Policy and Resources Committee early in the New Year.

15. NATIONAL PARK (REPORT R – 13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 69)

The Committee has considered the implications of the recent announcement from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on the proposed designation of the New Forest as a National Park.

In general terms, the Committee restated the Council's strong support for the proposals made in the 1998 by the New Forest Committee for the future of the New Forest as including the creation of a tailor-made statutory co-ordinating body. In addition, whilst the Council accepts current constraints of available Parliamentary time, there is a view that the special and unique status of the New Forest demands that the changes for its long term status in management should be those that are widely recognised to best meet the needs of the New Forest, even if that requires some delay in implementation.

A letter in those terms was sent to the Countryside Agency by the Leader of the Council and this action has been formally confirmed.

The New Forest Committee and the New Forest Consultative Panel have also been informed of the report to Policy and Resources Committee.

Finally, the continued commitment of the Council to working with the New Forest Committee, other New Forest bodies, the Countryside Agency and the Government in order to secure the best designation and administrative arrangements to meet the special needs of the New Forest and of its long term protection has been reiterated.

16. DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION – RETIREMENT (13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 72)

The Committee has been advised that the Director of Finance and Administration will retire from the Council's employment on the grounds of ill-health.

Tribute was paid to the contribution of Mr Gurney to the work of the Council over the years.

17. CHIEF EXECUTIVE – RETIREMENT (13/10/99) (MINUTE NO. 73)

As a result of the decision that the Director of Finance and Administration will have to retire on the grounds of ill health and also to meet the Government's modernisation agenda, the Council needs to review its management arrangements. To facilitate such a review, the Council's Chief Executive had agreed to accept early retirement.

In the light of that decision, the Head of Personnel has been authorised to conclude negotiations with the Chief Executive, Mr I B Mackintosh, for early retirement.

All members of the Council and all employees have been notified of Mr Mackintosh's impending retirement.

The question of which officers should be appointed in a temporary capacity as Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer will also need to be determined at the Council meeting and will be the subject of a separate report of a special meeting of the Committee to be held on 27 October 1999.

**Councillor S A Hayes
Chairman**

- Attachments - Appendix 1 – Report Item 4
- Appendix 2 – Report Item 5(a) and (b)
- Appendix 3 – Report Item 5(e) and (f)
- Appendix 4 – Report Item 12

(Ctteemtg/Cttee/PR131099/Report)

APPENDIX 4

MEETINGS MAY 2000 - MAY 2001

DATE	TIME ¹	MEETING	VENUE ¹
2000			
May			
15	18:30	Annual Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
30	9:45	Leisure Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
31	9:30	Planning and Transportation Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
June			
1	10:00	Environmental Services and Licensing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
3	18:30	Central Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
14	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
16	9:30	Business Services Contracts Committee	Committee Room 1, Lyndhurst
21	18:00	Housing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
23	14:30	Direct Services Contracts Committee	Council Chamber, Lymington
July			
5	10:00	Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
12	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
17	18:30	Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
August			
9	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
29	9:45	Leisure Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
September			
7	10:00	Environmental Services and Licensing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
8	9:30	Business Services Contracts Committee	Committee Room 1, Lyndhurst
13	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
15	14:30	Direct Services Contracts Committee	Council Chamber, Lymington
20	18:00	Housing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
26	10:00	Special Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
26	18:30	Central Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
27	9:30	Planning and Transportation Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
October			
11	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
18	10:00	Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
30	18:30	Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst

¹Times and venues are subject to change

MEETINGS

MAY 2000 - MAY 2001

DATE	TIME ¹	MEETING	VENUE ¹
November			
7	9:45	Leisure Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
8	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
9	10:00	Environmental Services and Licensing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
14	18:30	Central Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
15	18:00	Housing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
24	9:30	Business Services Contracts Committee	Committee Room 1, Lyndhurst
29	9:30	Planning and Transportation Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
December			
1	14:30	Direct Services Contracts Committee	Council Chamber, Lymington
12	10:00	Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
13	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
2001			
January			
8	18:30	Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
9	9:45	Leisure Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
10	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
11	10:00	Environmental Services and Licensing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
16	18:30	Central Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
24	18:00	Housing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
31	9:30	Planning and Transportation Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
February			
7	10:00	Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
14	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
23	9:30	Business Services Contracts Committee	Committee Room 1, Lyndhurst
26	18:30	Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
March			
6	9:45	Leisure Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
8	10:00	Environmental Services and Licensing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
9	14:30	Direct Services Contracts Committee	Council Chamber, Lymington
13	18:30	Central Services Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
14	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
21	18:00	Housing Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
28	9:30	Planning and Transportation Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst

¹Times and venues are subject to change

MEETINGS

MAY 2000 - MAY 2001

DATE	TIME ¹	MEETING	VENUE ¹
April			
4	10:00	Policy and Resources Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
11	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
24	18:30	Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
May			
9	9:00	Development Control Sub-Committee	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst
14	18:30	Annual Council	Council Chamber, Lyndhurst

(Cttee/Ctee/PR131099/Report)