

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

(Meeting held 13 January 2000)

1. ENHANCEMENT OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICES COMPUTERISED ENQUIRY SYSTEM (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 57)

The Committee have agreed outline proposals for enhancements to the Customer Services Computerised Enquiry System. Currently arrangements are in place which allow operators to deal with bookings, enquiries and complaints and to have instant access to any previous data so that they may customise their response, sympathise with previous difficulties and check on a householders entitlement to services.

A fundamental review of the system is now necessary to take into account the advantage of greater electronic interaction with the community and the undeniable benefits of linking together with local agencies such as Town and Parish Councils and customers in general.

A new Computerised Enquiry System will improve response levels for community planning and inform both the modernising agenda process as well as providing performance data in any scrutiny role across a range of service areas.

The service will operate within a total quality management framework thereby encouraging service providers to self monitor performance within policy standards set by the Council.

The new Customer Services system will allow customers to access and book services direct and will be available for enquiry and booking purposes 24 hours a day. Similarly, data on refuse collection days, grass cutting schedules, street cleansing programme, abandoned vehicle progress reports, commercial waste collections etc will be able for referencing and or enquiry/booking. Importantly the new system will ensure that whether a customer contacts a District Council, a Town/Parish Council, the County Council or any other local presence the system will be available in these locations to give a virtually seamless service as far as the community is concerned.

Subject to further discussions it is also planned that County Council and Town/Parish Council information will also be available so that District Council staff can provide answers to questions that currently they are not able to.

It is hoped that the first phase of the new Customer Services system will be available for 1 April 2000. Over the next 12 months internal systems will be enhanced to link into the new system and external partners will be given direct access as well as consumers. Over the next 24 months external agencies will be invited to input their data to broaden the scope of the system.

2. CHRISTMAS FLOODING 1999 (REPORTS F AND G) (MINUTES 62 AND 63)

During a period from early on Christmas Eve until Christmas Day widespread surface water flooding occurred across the District Council area. Council staff received more than 90 telephone calls from residents requesting sandbags or reporting imminent flooding of their property. The Fire and Rescue Service also received more than 60 calls for assistance. Approximately 4,000 sandbags were made up by New Forest Commercial Services and some 3,100 of these were delivered during this period.

All properties that requested sandbags and assistance will be asked to complete a questionnaire in order to gather data for future use.

Despite the extremely severe weather conditions, only minimal damage occurred to New Forest District Council managed coastal defences over the Christmas period. Although a considerable quantity of beach material was displaced during the storms Hurst Spit was not breached.

The Committee have placed on record their thanks to all the staff concerned for their hard work and dedication during this difficult period.

3. ABANDONED VEHICLES (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO. 65)

The Committee considered a number of recommendations from the Environmental Services and Licensing Policy and Performance Review Sub-Committee in relation to abandoned vehicles. The numbers of vehicles being abandoned continues to rise and the Council has particular difficulty in tracing some vehicle owners. The Committee noted the impact that the rise in abandoned vehicles is having on service budgets and the achievement of performance targets. The Committee have agreed that their policy and classification of wrecks will be reviewed and that officers should consider the possibility of offering a disposal service.

As a matter of urgency the Committee have strongly supported the convening of a meeting between the Police, DVLA and representatives of interested adjacent authorities to clarify the position regarding untaxed vehicles and to explore ways of improving relations and speeding up the administrative processes involved in disposing of abandoned vehicles. The Committee also strongly supports urging the DVLA to consider amendments to the vehicle transfer documents to ensure that both a previous owner and new owner are legally required to register change of ownership.

The problem of disposal of abandoned vehicles is a countrywide one and the Committee are therefore asking the Local Government Association to consider the problem.

The Committee have also considered the possibility of a one month amnesty, whereby the Council might dispose of vehicles, free of charge, on production of the necessary documentation. However, members have asked for a further report on this matter detailing the financial implications of such a policy before any commitment is made.

**Councillor J Waddington
CHAIRMAN**