

REPORT OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

(Meeting held 2 February 2000)

1. TRANSPORT LINKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 77).

The County Council are putting forward a number of initiatives to help people in rural areas, which will be included in their Rural Transport Partnership Action Plan for South West Hampshire. This Plan will supplement the Passenger Transport Annual Report, which gives information on passenger transport services and how they are supported. A copy of the 1999/2000 Annual Report has been placed in the Members' Room. The County Council has recently established a Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) Fund, drawing on funding available through the Rural Development Commission, whose aim is to reduce the social exclusion of rural people in rural areas by providing them with access to jobs, services and social activities through long-term improvements to transport services. The Committee discussed providing some funding for projects being promoted by the County Council which are specifically designed to help young people make journeys other than those for educational purposes. Educational journeys are already supported by the County Council.

The County Council are already subsidising improved bus services in some rural parts of the District. They have increased the frequency of the No 56 Lymington-Lyndhurst-Southampton route and also taken over funding of the Bransgore-Bournemouth service which runs fortnightly on Friday evenings. Other projects, such as the "rural rider" scheme at Fordingbridge, have unfortunately not proved successful. They were however considering measures to improve services in other areas. Options include an improved service between Lymington and Bournemouth. Members considered that Milford-on-Sea should be included on the route, and also that an evening service should be provided from Lymington towards Bournemouth.

Members also requested that the Wilts and Dorset Bus Company should be asked to consider extending young persons' concessions to people under sixteen years of age, in common with the other companies operating in this area.

The Committee welcomed the success of the bus service from Bransgore Village to Bournemouth which was run fortnightly on Friday evenings. This was a relatively low cost option to help young people reach an entertainment centre. The annual subsidy for this service was only £1,500. It was suggested that Parish Councils should be made aware of such initiatives as they might consider subsidising additional enhancements.

The County Council have appointed a Rural Transport Partnership Officer to produce and develop the Action Plans which must be submitted to the Rural Development Commission by 31 March 2000 in order to secure the full allocation of RTP money.

There are a number of projects under consideration to try to help young people in rural areas. These would require a financial contribution from this Council as set out below. These include:

- A shared taxi scheme to allow young people in the north western villages to get to Fordingbridge and the public transport links to Poole and Bournemouth – cost to this Council £1,000 per annum

- Pool moped schemes – to allow a young person to hire a moped for some months to allow access to employment. It was suggested there should be a trial project in the north western parishes. This Council would have to meet part of the cost. This was projected to be £5,000 towards start up costs and £1,000 per annum running costs
- A half fare scheme for the school holiday periods
- A half fare scheme for Saturdays
- Young persons' rail cards
- Travel tokens for young people – cost £11,000 per annum for a trial project in the north western parishes, to be funded entirely by this Council
- Special bus services (like the Bransgore to Bournemouth service) –cost £2,500 per annum.

The Committee considered that all of the new initiatives should be subject to monitoring and regular review in order to assess their effectiveness. As part of the review, the needs of additional areas could be addressed.

The County Council have been advised of this Council's support for the various initiatives that it is developing to improve public transport in rural areas, and in particular to help young people.

It has been agreed that a pilot travel token scheme should be introduced to benefit young people aged between fourteen and sixteen who live in the north-western parts of the District, and also to contribute to the trial pool moped scheme and the shared taxi scheme. Bids have been included in the Committee's Revenue estimates, together with a sum to allow subsidy of special bus services.

It was also agreed that the Chairman would write to the Wilts and Dorset Bus Company to advocate the extension of their concessions for young persons to all people under sixteen years of age.

2. HAMPSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO 78).

The Committee was advised of progress in preparing the Hampshire Local Transport Plan (LTP), and of the implications of the Plan for this District. The Local Transport Plan forms the basis for Government funding through the Local Transport Settlement and the County Council's Capital Programme.

The provisional LTP for the period 2000/05 had been submitted to the Secretary of State in July 1999. This had included a statement from each District Council indicating how they would take part in implementing the Plan. This Council's statement was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Council had also participated in the preparation of the Plan, both through officer working, and through the Southampton and New Forest Area Transportation Strategy Members' Panels. A Members' Strategy Panel will be set up for the Coastal Towns area – but in the meantime a bid for £27,000 has been included in the capital programme for 2000/01 and £220,000 in 2001/02 for that package area.

The Local Transport Settlement for Hampshire for 2000/01 is £9.8m. This compares favourably with the settlement for 1999/2000 of £7.1m. The broad allocation of this money across the County will be £1.4m on safety schemes (casualty reduction); £4.5m on maintenance (principal roads and bridges) and £3.9m on Area Strategies and minor works. In addition, the Secretary of State has indicated that the settlement could rise by up to one third in 2001/02.

The programme of work in 2000/01 includes the next phase of works to Lyndhurst High Street (£600,000, continuing into 2001/02); safety improvements outside Brockenhurst School (£100,000); and works to New Milton Station Road (£27,000 net – part developer-funded). There were also schemes which were wholly funded by developers' contributions at Water Lane, Totton (cycle route) and Bickerley Road, Ringwood (footway).

The Committee have noted progress in the development of the LTP and welcomed the measures being included for this District.

Members also noted that additional resources are likely to be needed if full advantage is to be taken of the Local Transport Plan system.

During the discussion, Members felt that they needed a greater understanding of the general workings of the transportation and highways functions. It was therefore agreed that a training seminar on transportation issues should be arranged as a matter of urgency.

In response to a question, it was also agreed that information on the latest position with respect to the Highways Agency arrangements in this District would be sent to all members of the Committee.

3. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEWS (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO 80).

The Committee has reviewed the boundaries of the Conservation Areas at Ashlett Creek, Breamore, Damerham, Eling, Hythe, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury. Comments had been received from Fawley, Damerham, Totton and Eling, Rockbourne and Whitsbury Parish Councils. Breamore and Martin Parish Councils had indicated informally that there was unlikely to be any objection but asked that any decision relating to their areas should not become operative until after they had agreed their formal views. Hythe and Dibden Parish Council had requested that consideration of the Conservation Area boundary in Hythe should be deferred to allow the Conservation Officer to address their Planning Committee to answer local concerns.

The review was largely a technical exercise to ensure that there was a coherent and easily identifiable boundary to each conservation area. Many of the changes reflected development since the boundary was last reviewed.

At the last meeting of the Committee the Director of Environment Services was authorised to cancel the designation of the Hanger Farm, Totton Conservation Area, provided the Town Council did not maintain their objection. All the buildings at Hanger Farm were either listed or in this Council's ownership, while significant trees were protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Conservation Area status gave no additional protection. The Committee was advised that the Town Council had maintained their objection on the basis that there was no disadvantage to the level of protection offered to these buildings by retaining conservation area status; and regard must be taken of the perception of potential developers if the designation

was removed. The Director of Environment Services has therefore been authorised to cancel the designation of Hanger Farm, Totton, as a conservation area at such time as the surrounding development proposed in the District Local Plan has been completed.

The Committee was advised of the outcome of consultations on each conservation area. Whitsbury Parish Council had strongly objected to the inclusion of land, within their ownership, to the rear of the Jubilee Hall, in the conservation area. The Committee was advised that conservation area designation would not prejudice the Parish Council's aspirations to clear and landscape this area.

Members expressed concern that the Parish Council comments in respect of each of these proposals was not included in the report and that three parishes had been unable to respond in the six week period between the start of the consultation and the meeting. It was agreed that an item should be included on the agenda at the next Local Council Liaison meeting to allow this issue to be discussed.

The revised boundaries of the conservation areas in Ashlett Creek, Damerham, Eling, Rockbourne and Whitsbury have been agreed, and the designation will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Director of Environment Services has also been authorised to designate the revised boundaries of the Breamore and Martin Conservation Areas, subject to the Parish Councils expressing no substantive objections to such proposals.

Consideration of the Conservation Area in Hythe has been deferred to allow the Parish Council to gain further information before expressing a formal view.

4. HIGH HEDGES : POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO 81).

The Committee was advised that the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR) were consulting on various options for dealing with problems caused by unreasonably high hedges in domestic gardens. In broad terms the options were:-

- Option 1 - Promote existing procedures
- Option 2 - Build on existing procedures and take further non-legislative action, including giving more advice
- Option 3 - Create primary legislation to extend easements of light to cover land as well as buildings
- Option 4 - Create primary legislation to set up a new complaint-based system to control problem high hedges

The DETR had also posed a series of questions to which they requested specific responses.

The Committee debated the need for specific legislation to allow local authorities to respond to complaints about high hedges. Statutory controls could be seen as additions to the education and mediation routes currently used by this Council. Members were, however, mindful of the practical difficulties, including that of recovering the cost of possible remedial works, should an enforcement route be followed. On balance, the Committee supported a combination of Options 1 and 2 – without any additional statutory powers. The response to the DETR's specific questions amplifies the reasoning behind this preference.

The DETR have been commended for their initiative to seek remedies to an increasing public concern over nuisance hedges – although this is not a significant problem in this area, nor indeed in other districts which have been consulted by this Council.

5. HYTHE SALTMARSH - TRIAL USE OF DREDGED SEDIMENTS (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO 82).

The Committee considered an application for consent under Sections 60-63 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 for the trial use of dredged sediment to re-charge a small section of Hythe Saltmarsh. The Leisure Services Committee had already given its consent as the land-owning Committee for that part of the proposed area which was owned by this Council. The rest was believed to be owned by Esso. The proposal has come forward as a result of a condition imposed by English Nature on Associated British Ports in their consent for maintenance dredging for the port.

While noting that English Nature supported the principle of this experiment, the Committee expressed its concern at the possible ecological effects, including the oxidation and release of heavy metal pollutants from the sediments involved. In addition, there was concern about the potential spread of the dredged materials and their effect on the nearby shellfish fisheries. Consideration of this application was therefore deferred to allow further information to be sought from English Nature on the potential ecological effects of the proposals.

6. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO 83).

A draft report has been commissioned from Environmental Resources Management on a comprehensive assessment of the character of the landscape covering the whole of the New Forest District and the New Forest Heritage Area. The draft has been approved to form the basis of public consultations. The Committee will consider the final report in due course when the evaluation process has been completed.

7. PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE - 17 DECEMBER 1999 (REPORT J) (MINUTE NO 84).

The Committee have confirmed the recommendations of the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Review Sub-Committee at their meeting held on 17 December 1999. These included:

- Agreeing that priority should be given to progressing the traffic management measures which were identified as having a high priority by the Review Sub-Committee;
- Agreeing that the current Building Control fees should be continued, but that they should be subject to further review in six months' time;
- Agreeing a programme of work for Totton Town Centre, subject to funding being available from Local Transport Plan Settlements through the County Council;
- Agreeing that the District Council virement of funding for the town centre schemes could be moved from 2000/01 to post 2000/01;

- Agreeing that the funding for the provision of a footbridge at Fordingbridge should be re-allocated with £57,000 of the money to be used to fund works to Fawley Square. A scheme for environmental improvements in the area of the A338 sliproad, Fordingbridge, will be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the Review Sub-Committee. Proposals for environmental improvements to Milford seafront will be held in abeyance pending further consideration of this issue;
- With respect to the arrangements for public participation at the Development Control Sub-Committee, no change will be made to the arrangements for notifying the public of public participation; the deadline for public participants to register; assisting the public to appoint spokespeople; or in the advance timetabling of items on the agenda. The present seating arrangements for public participants within the Council Chamber will be retained. Nor will there be any change to order of speaking in the public participation period. Speakers in the public participation period will continue to be given no further opportunity to participate after they have spoken and been questioned by members. The explanatory leaflet on public participation at Development Control Sub-Committee will also make it clear that the officers will not normally introduce an item.

8. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO 85).

Supplementary Planning Guidance for land at Everton Road, Everton; The Dairy/Salvation Army site, Fordingbridge; The Orchard site, Dibden and Employment land at Christchurch Road, Ringwood, has been adopted as Council policy. The SPG had been subject to public consultation, and had been modified in response to comments received.

**Cllr Miss P A Drake
CHAIRMAN**

(pc020200/report)