

REPORT OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 5 April 2000)

1. LOCAL AGENDA 21 - ANNUAL REPORT ON PROGRESS (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 93)

The annual review of progress on Local Agenda 21 issues has been brought forward from September to April in each year. The Committee therefore noted progress on their LA 21 objectives since September 1999, and were also advised of work on a number of other projects, and initiatives which were related. These include the publication of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire; the completion of the Shoreline Management Plan for the Western Solent and Southampton Water; work on an urban capacity study of the District's main towns to inform the local plan review process; a number of transport initiatives (including transport for young people); the completion of the review of conservation area boundaries in the District and work on the protection of listed buildings.

Measures to maximise the urban capacity of the District's main towns should be addressed with some care. It is essential that high density developments are attractive to a wide sector of the population to avoid the creation of poor quality development. Innovative schemes in Totton have successfully minimised overlooking and other problems in high density schemes, and the Council should draw on the expertise of the private sector in devising proposals. It is also essential that high density residential developments within town centres do not threaten their vitality as commercial centres and sources of community and social activity.

The Committee has noted progress which has been made on LA21 issues since September 1999, and also set the following additional objectives:

- i) Produce and consult on issues papers for the First Review New Forest District Local Plan in preparation for publication of a first stage Deposit Plan;
- ii) Using ideas generated through the local community workshops, to agree a first phase package of transport and environmental improvements in Totton town centre for implementation in 2001-02;
- iii) Secure through Hampshire County Council, funding for further investment in sustainable transport within the District;
- iv) Complete work on the study of urban capacity in the District's main towns and input results into the local plan review process;
- v) Report to the New Forest Committee and the Planning and Transportation Committee on the New Forest Indicators Project and work with the New Forest Committee to set out a plan of further action in relation to this project;
- vi) Complete work on the draft Tree Strategy for the District;

- vii) Continue work on the landscape character assessment for the District;
- viii) Work to establish means of maintaining and promoting the vitality of town centres for commercial, community and social activities;

2. PPG12 : DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND NEW FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO.94)

The Committee was advised of new guidelines for the preparation and review of local plans as set in PPG12, and considered the timetable for the review of the District Local Plan in the light of this guidance. Councils are being encouraged to streamline the process, however the Government had not introduced any measures to limit the time spent on the Local Plan Inquiry or the preparation of the Local Plan Inspector's report, which together form a significant proportion of the time spent on the preparation of a local plan.

Members welcomed the publication in Report C of a list of environmental considerations which should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans.

The Committee has agreed a timetable for the early review of the District local plan to bring it into conformity with the newly adopted Hampshire County Structure Plan Review. A limited number of policy areas will have to be examined, relating mainly to the Green Belt designation of the New Forest in the light of National Park designation; employment land; housing allocations; and transport policies. Members have also been invited to suggest policies which they feel should be reviewed in this first tranche. Technical work and consultations will start in April 2000 leading towards the Plan being placed on first stage deposit in May 2001. The timing of the programme after this first stage deposit will depend on the scale and complexity of the representations received but it is intended to proceed through to the Local Plan Inquiry in late 2002 leading to adoption in 2004. Members expressed their concern that even this limited review process would take 4 years.

It is expected that there will be a wider scale review of the Plan, at a later date, but staffing resources may limit the degree to which an overlapping, rolling programme of review can be introduced. A report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the resources which will be needed to undertake the proposed local plan programme and associated preparatory work.

Members expressed their concern that the timetables for the production of Regional Planning Guidance, for the County Structure Plan, and the District Local Plan caused inevitable disparity and inconsistencies, leading to public confusion. It also meant that the District Local Plan was inevitably out of date shortly after it was finalised.

Members also expressed the view that measures to encourage the use of public transport should place less emphasis on penalising the motorist. It should be recognised that there must be an attractive, readily available public transport alternative if members of the public are to be encouraged to reduce their usage of the private motor car. Members considered that this should be drawn to the Government's attention on all possible occasions.

3. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT : “DEVELOPING HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL’S REVISED PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY : YOUR CHANCE TO CONTRIBUTE” (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 95)

The Committee noted the response which had already been submitted to the County Council through a questionnaire on public transport services. Members expressed the view that there is insufficient effort made to publicise public transport services. Recent improvements to a bus service from Netley Marsh/Totton to Southampton had received no local publicity, and the local District Councillor had not been told anything about the new service. It was also commonplace for even basic information, such as a timetable, to be unavailable at bus stops. Members were advised that the County Council had recently debated this issue and would be raising the question of whose responsibility it was to publicise services and erect timetables, with the bus companies.

The publicity of services was also related to the County Council’s statement that public transport needs within the County were largely met. This could be a reflection that there were very low public expectations of the services which should be available, fuelled by the lack of basic useful information. The Committee agreed that the response to the County Council should be amended to reflect this concern and also emphasised by a separate letter from their Chairman.

It was agreed that the County Council should also be asked to consider the effects of re-routing buses onto potentially busier routes. This could remove services from small communities and leave them without any provision at all. In addition the County Council should be requested to explore the possibility of inviting Bournemouth based bus companies to extend their services into the coastal towns. Their fares were relatively cheaper than those applying to the Southampton services and this could introduce useful competition onto the coastal routes.

4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : “ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE” (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 96)

The Committee has amended the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on “Access for Disabled People” in the light of comments received in the public consultation exercise. The SPG, as amended, has been formally adopted to supplement the District Local Plan. It will be published in due course.

5. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEWS (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO. 97)

Revised boundaries have been designated for the conservation area in Breamore and Hythe. This completes the review of all the boundaries of conservation areas in the District, to make sure that they are up-to-date, and formulated on a basis which is technically sound.

6. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : DESIGN OF SHOP FRONTS (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO 98)

The Committee has approved for public consultation draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on the design of shop fronts. The draft document will be amended to make it clear that the guidance applies to new shops, as well as the refurbishment of existing premises. In addition the section on colouring schemes will be expanded as this can be critical to the appearance of the finished shopfront and there should be greater assistance on this issue.

7. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE : DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRES - DEVELOPERS CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIEU OF ON SITE CAR PARKING (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 99)

The Committee has approved, for consultation, draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in support of policy DW-T13 of the District Local Plan. This policy provides for developments in town centres to take place with reduced on-site car parking, subject to developers making financial contributions towards improvements to accessibility by other means than the car.

In answer to members' concerns, they were advised that in many circumstances it would still be appropriate to require the full provision of car parking to County standards - and this was provided for within the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance. In addition, it was now recognised that the cost of providing car-parking spaces in the main towns in the District was considerably higher than the calculation base currently used by the County surveyor. Revised figures had been calculated for Fordingbridge, Hythe, Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood and Totton based on current land values and other costs. The figures now reflected the actual cost of providing each car parking space. These figures would be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they continued to reflect land values. The SPG would be amended to make it clear that this would happen. The same sum would be collected regardless of whether it was intended to spend it on the provision of alternative car parking spaces or to fund accessibility by non-car modes of transport.

8. THE SETTING UP OF A CUSTOMER PANEL FOR BUILDING CONTROL (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO.101)

The Committee agreed the principle of establishing a Customer Panel for Building Control on the same lines as the Panel which has been established for the whole of Eastern Dorset and the New Forest. That Panel has proved to be useful, but is not sufficiently locally based to allow proper feedback from the customers of this Authority's Building Control Services. The Panel will be of great assistance in helping to identify means through which to provide a high quality standard of service, by making suggestions and presenting ideas. The suggested membership of the panel was set out in the report. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee have been nominated to serve on the Panel.

9. LANTAC (LOCAL AUTHORITY NATIONAL TYPE APPROVAL CONSORTIUM) PARTNER AUTHORITY SCHEME (REPORT J) (MINUTE NO.102)

The Committee have adopted the following resolution in support of the adoption and continued implementation of the LANTAC scheme.

“That the Council agrees to adopt the “Rules of Membership of a LANTAC Consortium” currently applying and adopted by the LANTAC Executive Committee and the Local Government Association, in particular the Council agrees to provide the Secretary of the appropriate Consortium, and the LANTAC Co-ordinator, with an undertaking approved by its public liability insurer, St Paul International Insurance Company Ltd, that in the event of a claim arising in respect of any work shown on plans passed by it under the regulation, or on plans deposited with it in reliance of a type or system approval notice in respect of which notice of rejection has not been given within the relevant period from their deposit, the Council:

- i) shall not pursue any action, claim or other proceedings against any other Council which is a member of LANTAC Consortium dealing with Type or System Approved matter under the Partner Authority Scheme with LANTAC, any officers of such Council or any other person or body concerned with the procedures relating to the Type and System Approval Schemes or Partner Authority Schemes; and
- ii) shall indemnify and keep indemnified all such Councils, Officers, persons and bodies against all losses, damages, proceedings, costs and expenses whatsoever in respect of the claim.”

10. ENFORCING PLANNING CONTROL (REPORT K) (MINUTE NO 103)

The Committee has agreed draft policy guidance on planning enforcement which had been developed to inform the public about:-

- the Council’s planning enforcement policy;
- how to complain about a breach of planning control;
- how we investigate complaints and take enforcement action;
- the different type of enforcement powers available to the Council;
- government guidance on how and when to take enforcement action; and
- why enforcement action can sometimes take so long.

The Committee has agreed that all members should be kept informed of enforcement action within their wards. They favoured the publication of a list, on a ward by ward basis, which would be available to members on a confidential basis. It was also suggested that members might be given on-line, read only access to listings of this nature. They were advised that this option will be investigated further.

11. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME (REPORT M) (MINUTE NO>104)

The Committee compared the performance of the concessionary travel scheme during 1999, with that in 1997 and 1998. They have also agreed the following concessions which will apply with effect from 1 July 2000.

Those claimants who qualify for a free concession be offered the choice of

- i) Tokens to the value of £38; or
- ii) A Farepass (cost to this Council £40.07) allowing half price travel on all public service bus journeys which start within Hampshire;

Pensioners who do not qualify for a free concession be offered a Farepass at a cost of £25.

The approved budget for concessions for 2000/01 is £422,870. The projected cost of the approved scheme is £423,074, which is in broad conformity with the budget.

The Committee was also advised that the Government intends to amend the Transport Act which is currently before Parliament to the effect of providing travel passes, free of charge, to all pensioners. It is likely that this will take effect on 1 April 2001. A full report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee once further information, including the financial implications are available.

12. CHRISTCHURCH BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN - PROPOSED MODIFICATION (REPORT N) (MINUTE NO. 105)

The Committee have agreed the final response to be made to proposed modifications to the Christchurch Borough Local Plan.

There is a revised policy for employment development at Bournemouth International Airport. This proposes a requirement for a comprehensive development or redevelopment scheme to be prepared. This Council's concerns regarding employment development at Bournemouth Airport have always centred on the potential impact this might have on the local highway network within this District. In the event policy E15 of the Plan retains the requirement for the provision of a link road to the A338 and other improvements to the B3073 at Hurn Village. This should reduce the potential for increased traffic using the Avon causeway.

Concern has however been expressed at the deletion of a specific requirement for highway infrastructure provision in respect of the limited employment redevelopment at the airport which was envisaged by policy E16. This Council's response seeks the reinstatement of criteria originally contained in deposit plan policy.

Members were pleased to note that the C137 Avon causeway had now been deleted from policy T5 which listed a number of roads where highway improvements were proposed.

Christchurch Borough Council are not intending to amend the status of the A35 in the Borough Local Plan.

13. LAND AT LYMINGTON (REPORT O) (MINUTE NO. 107)

The Hampshire County Council has offered for sale, by tender, 0.3 hectares (0.8 Acres) of land adjacent to and to the rear of the District Councils premises at Lymington Town Hall. The Committee decided not to submit an offer for the site at this time. It was agreed that the County Council should be advised of this Council's disappointment that they did not feel able to work together with this Authority to find appropriate community uses for the site. They have been requested to delay the disposal of the site for a period of six months to allow such discussions to take place.

14. PUBLICITY FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS - NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATION (REPORT L) (MINUTE NO 109)

In the past it has been decided not to adopt a system for neighbour notification on planning applications. There were technical problems with out-of-date maps, with the cost of postage and the extra staff resources required. Instead, in 1992 it was decided to display site notices and to publish an advertisement listing planning applications in local newspapers.

Recent surveys through the Citizens' Panel have established that there is a strong aspiration for a full neighbour notification scheme. With the introduction of the new planning system, and improved map bases it is now technically feasible to provide this service. The current cost of advertising of planning applications was substantial at £42,000 in 1999/2000. The statutory requirement accounted for about £20,000 of this budget, which could be reduced considerably by restricting the advertisement of planning applications to those which were required by statute. In addition there were costs associated with the erection of site notices which would no longer be needed. These resources could be diverted to a full neighbour notification scheme, which it was therefore expected could be provided from within existing budgets. It was estimated that neighbour notification would cost £10,000 per annum in postage and stationery, and £10,000 for additional administrative support

It was agreed that a scheme of neighbour notification for planning applications should be introduced as soon as detailed procedures can be agreed and put into place (but not later than from 1 October 2000). From the same date the use of newspaper advertisements and site notices will be restricted to those cases where such publicity is required under the planning legislation, or where a site notice may be the only practical means of advising affected parties of the proposed development

A report on the neighbour notification scheme will be submitted to the Committee after six months of operation.

**Cllr Miss P A Drake
CHAIRMAN**