

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

(Meetings held on 1 June, 8 June and 26 June 2000)

1. SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLANS (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 10)

The Committee have adopted the Western Solent and Southampton Water Shoreline Management Plan and the Poole and Christchurch Bay Shoreline Management Plan as the Council's official source of technical guidance on coastal defence matters.

The development of Shoreline Management Plans (SMP's) resulted from an initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who wished to see a set of inter-connecting strategic coastal defence plans drawn up for the whole coastline of England and Wales. For New Forest District Council's coastline the Western Solent and Southampton Water SMP covers the area from Redbridge to Chewton Bunny and the Poole and Christchurch Bay SMP extends from Hurst Spit to Durlston Head. The two plans have a large degree of overlap to ensure that the importance of Hurst Spit is properly taken into account.

The District Local Plan and the New Forest District Council Coastal Management Plan, which are currently under review will reflect and have regard to the defence strategies proposed in the two SMP's.

2. PUBLIC CONVENIENCE – LYMINGTON QUAY (REPORTS F AND A) (MINUTE NOS. 13 AND 18)

Following a site visit on 8 June where representatives of interested parties were invited to make their views known, the Committee have agreed to the provision of a new public convenience at Lymington Quay. The new building incorporates appropriate design specifications based on the Council's past experience of upgrading and providing new facilities throughout the District. It also allows for the provision of facilities for an attendant/cleaner and for the possibility of charging to be considered by members, in the future, as part of the expenditure review process.

In considering the options members took account of the problem of vandalism which greatly affected the design of the new building. The proposal is for the building to have a pitched roof incorporating roof lights to provide additional illumination and ventilation. The design also includes a central corridor housing all the pipework and services providing a secure area in the middle of the building away from possible vandalism. The provision of an attendant/cleaner full time in the summer months will also assist with the problem of security as well as providing almost continuous cleaning.

There has been a very extensive consultation exercise on the options for the new public convenience on Lymington Quay extending from 1997 through to 1999. Three key issues arose from the consultation, firstly that of circulation throughout and around the building, secondly, the issue of public safety and the problem of entrapment and thirdly access. Members agreed that by siting the new building in the centre of the Quay area these issues would be largely dealt with. The central position would also enable the Quay to be broken up to reduce the visual impact of the spread of car parking whilst possibly allowing for part of the car park to be used for other one off events.

In coming to their decision the Committee re-affirmed their view that the Council would not fund shower facilities for those people using the river which was under the control of the Harbour Commissioners and was therefore a matter for them to consider. However, the tenders for the work will be divided into two parts, one for a public convenience and one for a public convenience including shower facilities.

When the tenders are viewed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cllr Ault, as agreed by the Committee, there will be an opportunity for further discussion at that point with the Harbour Commissioners on the subject of inclusion of shower facilities.

Provision of £150,000 has been made in the Committee's budget for the construction of the new public convenience at Lymington Quay incorporating a covered waste bin store. Any savings accruing from the budget provision will return to the Council.

3. RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 15)

The Committee received a report outlining the current activities undertaken by the Dog Warden Service as part of their commitment to responsible dog ownership.

Last year, for the first time, the Dog Warden Service began micro-chipping dogs. The Dog Wardens have been overwhelmed with demand for this service. It is hoped that this initiative will help the Council reduce the amount it spends on kennelling and re-homing of unidentifiable unclaimed stray dogs.

A major part of the Dog Wardens' work is patrolling the district. During these patrols the Dog Wardens are not only on the look out for stray dogs but for irresponsible owners. Dog fouling is a big issue to the public and the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 adopted by the Council allows the Dog Wardens to serve fixed penalty notices on owners who allow their dogs to foul and then refuse to clean up after them.

Over the last year the Dog Wardens' have been carrying out work for some of the Parish Councils and it is hoped that in the next few months Service Level Agreements will be signed with some of the Parish Councils which will allow the Wardens to act as agents on Parish Council land enabling them to serve fixed penalty notices.

Education is an important aspect of the service and the Dog Wardens' regularly spend time with schools and clubs giving talks on responsible dog ownership. Often Dog Wardens are asked to judge dog owners and their dogs as part of the Kennel Club Good Citizens Dog Scheme.

The Committee have requested a further report, to include detailed facts and figures on the work of the service and an indication of resources required for different levels of service.

4. FUNDING FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS TO COMPLETE A CLOSE CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) REVIEW (MINUTE NO. 21)

The Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee at their meeting on 26 June 2000 considered a report outlining the way in which the Council could assess the benefits that CCTV may bring to the District and how a strategy and policy could be developed. Consideration was also given to the use of Neighbourhood Wardens, which the Government are currently sponsoring, in residential areas and areas of potential high crime.

CCTV works as an effective crime reduction and detection tool, particularly when used as part of a wider crime reduction strategy. It is a visual and positive sign that the Council and the community are actively trying to combat criminal and anti-social behaviour. The Police support the use of CCTV.

CCTV also gives people an increased sense of security and could encourage visitors to an area. The close monitoring of car parks and similar areas has benefits not only for crime prevention matters but also for traffic management purposes.

There are a number of known potential and actual problem areas within the District, namely, the town centre parts of Totton, Ringwood, Lymington and New Milton. Complaints and statistics indicate that these areas are the most susceptible to acts of criminal and anti-social behaviour and may benefit most from the use of CCTV. Lymington Chamber of Commerce have expressed a particular interest in supporting the introduction of CCTV and have made a commitment in principle to support financially the early introduction of a system into Lymington.

The Home Office is at the moment managing a CCTV initiative and providing capital grant for CCTV schemes. The first round of the initiative took place in 1999 and has so far resulted in awards of over £55M to schemes that successfully met the funding criteria. In the second round of the initiative, there will be an added emphasis on partnership between bidders and other users of CCTV in the public and private sectors, and in the joint management and operation of systems to increase effectiveness and achieve economies of scale.

As part of a multi faceted approach to crime prevention members also agreed to consider the development of a strategy for the use of neighbourhood wardens. Extensive training would be given to such persons and in many councils, the Police have offered to conduct much of this training.

As part of any consideration for the implementation of CCTV members have agreed that the views of the New Forest Community Safety Partnership, Town/Parish Councils, local business groups and the local community must be sought.

In order to consider the potential benefits and implications of developing a CCTV system in parts of the District, consultants will need to be appointed to undertake a technical appraisal. The scale and shape of any system will depend very much on an assessment of the need for CCTV as well as a technical assessment of the technology available. The Committee have therefore recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee be asked to approve a supplementary estimate in the sum of £12,000 to enable technical specialists to be employed in the current financial year.

5. GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER – PROPOSED CHANGES TO LIQUOR AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 22)

The Committee have agreed a response to the Government White Paper on proposed changes to Liquor and Entertainment Licensing. A copy of the White Paper and the Committee's response will be available in the Members' Room. A copy of the Committee's response will also be sent to each member of the Council and will be distributed in the Information Bulletin in due course.

The White Paper contains proposals for radical reform. For local authorities, the greatest impact will undoubtedly be the removal of jurisdiction for licensing from the Justices to local authorities.

The White Paper opts to split the licence into two and proposes a personal licence for an individual in charge of premises. There will, in future, be no scope for the Licensing Authority to exercise discretion or to rule on whether the person is fit and proper (to hold a licence). The application will be made simply for 'a licence' without specifying what kind of premises it is intended to run.

In their response members have detailed a number of points of concern including the proposal that shops, supermarkets and off-licence premises would have the same freedom to fix sales hours as on licensed premises. This could mean 24 hour opening and sale of liquor for some shops. Members are of the view that most crime in the New Forest area involves anti-social drink related behaviour and increased availability of alcohol would inevitably exacerbate the problem, particularly in residential areas close to shops.

Whilst there will be new offences relating to alcohol and, in the event of problems the Police will have a new power to close any premises for up to 24 hours at a time, members noted that all these measures will require additional Police resources.

In relation to the Appeals procedure the White Paper suggests a committee of three elected Councillors drawn from a large number of trained members that must be able to meet frequently and at short notice. Members expressed particular concern at the problems that will inevitably arise over the need to maintain a panel of suitably trained members who could be available at 24 hours notice to hear appeals.

Currently local authorities set their own fees which enable the licensing system to be self financing. The White Paper suggests that the Government proposes to cap the fees charged in licensing. The Committee were firmly of the view that local authorities should continue to have the power to set their own fees and that, if fees were capped, it would leave a local authority at a distinct financial disadvantage. If this proposal were to be enacted members considered that a returnable deposit should be sought from applicants to cover any costs that may arise.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful for officers to seek the views of other local authorities through their professional organisations and to make appropriate representations to the Local Government Association.

**COUNCILLOR J WADDINGTON
CHAIRMAN**

(Ctteemtg/Cttee/ES260600/Report)