

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meetings held on 6 March, 18 March and 8 April 2002)

1. **ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE – UPDATE (REPORT A – 6 MARCH) (MINUTE NO. 174)**

The Cabinet have noted with pleasure the good work that has been made on implementing the Electronic Governance Strategy. The strategy comprises a programme of projects aimed at providing new access channels to services and in some cases, new services. All projects planned for 2001/02 are well underway and are in line with allocated budgets. The following is a summary of the key projects and achievements:-

(a) Internet Development

The Council's website is being well used by members of the public for making enquiries and providing feedback on a range of issues. Comprehensive information is now provided in relation to taxation and benefits and planning applications can now be viewed on line. There is now on line access to the new choice based lettings scheme which has proved very popular.

(b) Public Information System

The Cabinet have agreed that the Public Information System kiosks have not been as successful as first anticipated, partly because their locations were not always suitable. This area of the service is being reviewed.

(c) Video Conferencing

Video conferencing facilities are installed between Appletree Court and the Town Hall at Lymington. Public video conferencing facilities are available at Hythe and Ringwood Local Information Offices and these facilities provide a link to the Tax and Benefits Division and the Housing Division. These facilities are proving very useful and consideration will be given to extending the service later in the year.

(d) Hampshire Public Services Network

This project will implement a new Voice and Data Communications Network. A digital telephone system is currently being installed throughout Council offices. This joint project will provide a regional voice and data communications infrastructure enabling participating public service organisations to be linked together as one large virtual private network.

One key benefit of the new network will be free telephone calls between connected partners.

(e) Document Imaging

After initial use in Taxation and Benefits, Document Imaging is now also used to scan planning applications and associated drawings onto the Council's website. This then links into the Council's planning information system. This area of the Council's website is currently attracting around 900 visitors per month.

(f) Geographic Information Systems (Customer Services)

During the year work began on a second phase of the new Customer Services System. The system supports the Customer Services Team in the Environment Services Directorate. The Team deal with a wide range of enquiries and complaints including abandoned vehicles, trade and bulky waste collection, grass cutting, highways maintenance and refuse collection.

(g) Members' ICT

Enabling members to use ICT in support of their democratic roles and for constituency business is an important part of the Electronic Governance initiative. During the past year work has concentrated on improving the robustness of the remote working arrangements.

(h) Local Information Offices

Work has started on an Intranet based system to develop an on-line information system to enable Information Offices to deal more effectively with enquiries from members of the public.

(i) Homeworking Project

The pilot homeworking project has been underway since April 2001. The technology aspects of the project have been positive. The overall experience of the homeworkers and the impact of this project on their office based colleagues is being closely monitored.

Following these and a number of other developments the Cabinet are confident that the Council will meet the Government's targets for 100% electronic service delivery by 2005.

2. PRINT SERVICES (REPORT B – 6 MARCH) (MINUTE NO. 175)

Following the re-organisation of the Chief Executive's Department in October 2001 a review was undertaken of the Print Service. The outcome of the review determined that the service was not viable and the Cabinet have agreed to a number of proposals to organise functions that are essential to continue, in a more efficient way, with a potential to reduce costs.

The Cabinet have recommended the following virements should be agreed to enable the proposals to be fully implemented.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That budget provision of £24,410 be vired to Secretarial Services to enable the corporate high volume copying service to be undertaken by Secretarial Services in the Chief Executive's Department;**
- (b) That budget provision of £32,000 be vired to Central Purchasing to enable the paper buying currently undertaken by Print Services;**
- (c) That budget provision of £20,710 be vired to Graphics Services to enable the procurement of external colour copying to continue; and**

- (d) *That budget provision of £25,870 be vired to ICT Services to enable the continuation of document image processing work associated with the scanning of planning applications for the Council's web site.*

**3. PLAY PROVISION AT FOREST FRONT, HYTHE (REPORT C – 6 MARCH)
(MINUTE NO. 176)**

Following unsuccessful attempts to secure lottery funding a funding plan which includes the use of developers' contributions has been agreed with Hythe and Dibden Parish Council, to develop a new play area at Forest Front, Hythe. The Cabinet have agreed that a sum of £75,000 should be allocated from developers' contributions to enable the implementation of this scheme.

Following wide spread community consultation and the appointment of local agencies a package of proposals has been developed for the development of land at Ash Close for much needed affordable housing, and the provision of new play facilities close by at Forest Front. The new play facilities will include separate skate park and toddlers' play areas. With these facilities, the new scheme will add considerable play value over and above what was previously available.

The Council has been a prime mover in helping this scheme to be realised. It is hoped that re-development of Ash Close and the creation of an improved facility at Forest Front will have a positive impact in terms of Crime and Disorder issues.

**4. RECREATION CENTRES : REVIEW OF OBJECTIVES (REPORT D – 6 MARCH)
(MINUTE NO. 177)**

The Council's Recreation Centre service undertook its Best Value Review in 2000/2001.

The Cabinet has considered the first of three reports which sets the direction and context for those that follow. At a later date the Cabinet will consider the outcome of benchmarking, this Council's performance against other providers and the assessment of different ways in which the service might be delivered. Firstly however the Cabinet have agreed a revised vision and objectives for the service.

One of the findings which was highlighted in the Best Value Inspectors' Report was the business orientated management style which exists at the Recreation Centres and the effect that this had had in progressively increasing usage and income levels.

The Inspectors felt that there was a need for the Council to review what it was trying to achieve in delivering services through the Recreation Centres and should address the issue of non-users and social inclusion by determining the balance between meeting financial and community objectives and giving clear policy guidance to Centre Managers.

As a result the implementation of a review of objectives was included as part of the improvement plan and the Leisure Portfolio Holder agreed that this should be a priority before undertaking an evaluation of alternative methods of service delivery.

The Leisure Review Panel has led the process and have consulted in the widest sense with a range of key stakeholders who are familiar with the Centres.

As a result the Cabinet have agreed a revised vision for the Recreation Centre Services as:-

“A service which provides leisure and recreation facilities and opportunities accessible to all and working with other agencies makes a positive contribution to the quality of peoples’ lives across the district”.

This vision is underpinned by a number of key objectives which identify in more detail what the service is trying to achieve across the range of its customers and for the community in general.

The detail of the agreed objectives are shown in the report considered by the Cabinet.

5. PROPOSED MAJOR CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM (REPORT G – 6 MARCH) (MINUTE NO. 180)

The Cabinet has agreed, taking into account comments made by the Economy and Planning Review Panel; the Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder a response to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) on a green paper: ‘Planning – Delivering a Fundamental Change’.

The Green Paper and associated documents propose very major changes to the planning system. The Government considers that the current system is too complex; too slow and unpredictable; is not customer-focused and fails to engage the community; results in planning departments being overstretched and is not effective with regard to enforcement.

The Cabinet agreed that the planning system is in need of reform and noted that the Local Government Association, the Planning Officers’ Society and the Royal Town Planning Institute have all been campaigning for reform.

In discussing the detail of the response to the DTLR the Cabinet commented that whilst a faster service delivery would be welcomed, this would be at the expense of consultation with Parish Councils and this would not be an acceptable way forward. Members were of the view that this was another example of central government control being imposed on local councils resulting in a further reduction in local democracy.

The Cabinet also drew particular attention in their response to the need to clarify the future roles of district councils in regional/sub-regional planning and county councils to ensure that there was no loss of local democracy arising from the proposed changes.

6. PROPOSALS FOR PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES IN NEW FOREST DISTRICT (REPORT H – 6 MARCH) (MINUTE NO. 181)

The Cabinet has agreed a response to the Boundary Commission on proposals for revised Parliamentary Constituencies in Hampshire.

The current review was based on the new district wards that come into effect in 2003.

Full details of the Commission's proposals for the whole of Hampshire were placed in the Members' Room. Copies of the large scale maps of the proposals are on deposit at, amongst other places, Appletree Court and the Town Hall, Lyminster. All members of the Council and all Parish and Town Councils in the District have been informed of the proposals.

The Commission is proposing only one change to the current constituency boundaries within the district, specifically affecting the parish of Boldre.

Under the new ward arrangements Boldre and Sway will form a single district ward. At present, these two parishes, being two different district wards, are in different constituencies, Boldre in New Forest East and Sway in New Forest West. This would no longer be permissible. The Commission has therefore proposed that the whole of the Boldre and Sway Ward should form part of the New Forest West constituency. The effect would be to transfer the Parish of Boldre from New Forest East to New Forest West.

The Cabinet considered written comments received from Boldre and Sway Parish Councils and noted that they were both strongly opposed to the proposal to place the new ward in New Forest West constituency. The Cabinet supported the arguments put forward by Boldre and Sway Parish Councils for the new ward to form part of the New Forest East Constituency.

To this effect, the Cabinet have responded to the Boundary Commission welcoming the proposal that the New Forest District Council should continue to be divided between two whole seats but objected to the Commission's proposals for the new Boldre and Sway ward to be located in the New Forest West constituency. A local inquiry into the proposals will be held later in the year.

7. PROPOSED NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK (REPORT A – 18 MARCH) (MINUTE NO. 187)

The Cabinet has agreed a response to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the New Forest National Park (Designation) Order 2002.

The Order was published on 21 February 2002. Objections or other representations to the Order had to be made no later than 25 March 2002. Following consideration of representations, the Secretary of State will then decide whether to confirm the Order or whether a public inquiry will be needed. It is likely that there will be a public inquiry held locally in the autumn/winter of 2002.

In addition, but separately the Countryside Agency had submitted advice to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on special administrative arrangements for the setting up and running of a National Park Authority.

The decision to proceed with a standard National Park Authority is contrary to the preference previously expressed by the Council for special legislation to meet with the unique needs of the New Forest.

It was noted that any National Park Authority was likely to have five parish council representatives to cover all 37 parishes within the district. Members agreed that it was important to emphasise to any new Authority the need to ensure that good working relationships were established with all affected parish councils in the district.

Concern was expressed that if a standard National Park Authority was agreed this might mean a loss of planning control at local level. This would be further exacerbated if the County Council lost the power to agree structure plans and could mean that the special qualities of the New Forest were not given the priority they required.

The Cabinet noted that the Council as a whole had always been of the view that a “tailor made” National Park was the best option for the New Forest but, in the absence of this option, the Council strongly supported the Countryside Agency’s advice on special administrative arrangements as an essential component. While the Council had made representations that the administrative arrangements should be discussed at any forthcoming public inquiry, it was a procedural matter over which the Council had no control. It was hoped that the Secretary of State would confirm, before the start of any public inquiry, that any Order to set up a National Park Authority would take this into account.

The detail of the response agreed by the Cabinet is set out below:-

- (i) That the District Council has consistently, with strong cross party agreement, initiated and supported measures intended to help the New Forest adapt to changing circumstances while securing its sustainable long-term protection. This aim is embodied in “The Heart of the Forest”, our corporate plan.

This Council led the way in promoting a recognised designation of the New Forest through the New Forest Heritage Area; and was instrumental in setting up the New Forest Committee to co-ordinate better the work of statutory and other bodies with New Forest responsibilities. We have pressed successive ministers properly to designate the New Forest as a national park or equivalent status area in order to provide long-term certainty. We have worked with the Countryside Agency (and its predecessor, the Countryside Commission) over a long period to try to secure a specially constituted and fully recognised statutory co-ordinating body to replace the voluntary arrangements of the New Forest Committee.

- (ii) That Designation of a New Forest National Park would go a long way to meeting our objective of securing an appropriate permanent statutory designation, but it is disappointing that the Countryside Agency have not been persuaded that the unique circumstances of the New Forest warrant recommending to the Secretary of State that there should be special legislation. This would secure proper representative membership of a statutory co-ordinating body, while also retaining local accountability through existing local authorities for their statutory functions.

The Secretary of State should be advised that New Forest District Council:

- Welcomes the recognition that the New Forest meets National Park designation criteria and requires statutory designation in order to provide this important area with long-term definition and protection.
- Generally supports the proposed boundary set out in the Designation Order, but objects to the exclusion of Milford-on-Sea and some western parts of the Avon Valley and, draws to the attention of the Secretary of State the other minor points about the boundary previously made to the Countryside Agency.

- Believes that a tailor-made New Forest Authority would be preferable to a standard National Park Authority, is disappointed that the Countryside Agency has not recommended that there should be special legislation, and for these reasons objects to the Designation Order.
- (iii) That the Secretary of State should also be informed that in the absence of its preference for tailor-made legislation, the District Council strongly supports the Countryside Agency's advice on special administrative arrangements. These should be embodied in a Government Circular that is specific to the New Forest. The District Council seeks early confirmation from the Secretary of State that any confirmed Orders for the New Forest would be accompanied by such advice. The Council also emphasises the need for the National Park Authority to establish good working relationships with affected Parish Councils;
- (iv) That the District Council continues to work actively in partnership with New Forest bodies to try to secure the best outcomes for the long-term protection of the New Forest; and will co-operate with and support the Countryside Agency and Secretary of State in achieving this aim.

8. BEST VALUE PROGRESS REPORT (REPORT A – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 192)

Best Value has progressed well over the last year. The process and guidance has improved and this is reflected in a number of measurable improvements coming out of the Year 2 Reviews.

In response to continued member and senior management concerns over the bureaucracy of the current Best Value system, the Cabinet has agreed a more streamlined process to support the flexible approach proposed in the recently published Best Value Guide.

Comparison of Performance Indicators overall show that 66% of the New Forest District Council's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) fall in the top quarter of performance in all England districts, with a further 18% falling in the average and better quarter of performance. Both the Audit Commission and District Audit commended the 2001 Best Value Performance Plan.

As part of the recent Government White Paper 'Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services' it was recommended that a summary of Best Value Performance Information should now be integrated within the Council Tax leaflet. Despite the considerably tight schedule the Cabinet were pleased to note that New Forest District Council was the only District Council locally that managed to achieve this.

The Cabinet has agreed a number of changes to the Five Year Service Review Programme and in particular will, at a later date, reconsider the proposed cross cutting reviews and the way in which the Local Strategy Partnership (LSP) and the Corporate Plan Review and Performance should inform the future shaping of the Review Programme.

The publication date for the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) has moved to 30 June annually to enable actual costs to be included in the Plan. The Cabinet has agreed that the overall structure of the Plan, based on performance by Portfolio, will remain primarily the same. They have however agreed some changes to reflect performance measurement more graphically and minimise some of the long text.

The Council at their meeting in May will be asked to approve the final Best Value Performance Plan.

9. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL (REPORT C – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 194)

The Council is a participating authority in the 'Fare-Pass' scheme. This is a scheme which offers a half fare pass that exceeds the statutory minimum scheme in as much that it offers half price travel not only in its own area but also throughout Hampshire.

The Transport Act 2000 allows local authorities to exceed the minimum scheme or offer alternative concessions, such as tokens, as long as the half fare pass is offered as an option without charge.

The scheme also offers a free travel pass, which is available to some disabled residents. The pass known as a 'red pass' can be made available to residents who are blind (not partially sighted), people without arms, people with severe mental handicap and people who cannot hear and speak.

The Cabinet has agreed that this 'red pass' should be offered to those residents as detailed above and has agreed a supplementary estimate of £1,890 to cover the additional cost of the extension to the scheme.

The Cabinet has also urged adjoining authorities, particularly those with bus services that cross boundaries, to make similar arrangements in an effort to avoid confusion to customers.

10. DRAFT COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2002 – 2005 (REPORT D – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 195)

The Crime and Disorder Act 1988 states that Local Authorities must take the lead with local Police Forces in the fight against crime and disorder. Community Safety/Crime and Disorder partnerships must audit the crime and disorder levels in their area, identify priorities to be addressed and then consult with interested stakeholders and the local community to see if they are representing the views of the area.

Based on the feedback from consultation undertaken within the District, the New Forest Community Safety Partnership have produced a draft community safety strategy (attached as Appendix 1).

Overall the aim of the strategy is to reduce crime and disorder; reduce the fear of crime, improve community awareness of crime and disorder, the effects of anti-social behaviour and stress the importance of communities and individuals taking personal responsibility.

In discussing the issues the Cabinet agreed that youth workers, particularly detached youth workers, had been of great benefit in helping to target young people to ensure that they became responsible citizens in future years. Whilst the work was invaluable the Cabinet noted that the District Council should not be solely responsible for funding it. This was a matter for the County Council and others. Members indicated that they would welcome further investment from the County Council in this particular area.

Members noted that the level of “fear of crime” had reduced. Whilst the incidence of petty crime was still relatively high, a new approach to policing in the New Forest area was specifically targeting resources in this area. The New Forest now had its full complement of Police officers. The Cabinet agreed that rural areas deserved greater resources to deal with the increasing displacement of crime from urban areas.

It was agreed that there needed to be a strong element of parental responsibility in combating crime. Consideration was being given to setting up a “Parenting Project” in the district in addition to specific elements of the Community Safety Strategy.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Community Safety Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report be approved.

**11. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2001 – JANUARY 2002
(REPORT E – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 196)**

The Cabinet has considered the forecast budget variations of all Portfolios and Committees from the approved original estimates for 2001/02. They have agreed the revised General Fund Budget and the Revised Capital Expenditure and Housing Revenue Account Budget subject to those items reserved to Council as set out below.

The new variations in the General Fund show a decrease in net expenditure of £166,000 which together with previously reported items results in an overall decrease in the net budget of £112,000. In relation to capital expenditure for Other Services the new variations show a net increase in 2001/02 expenditure of £266,000. Cumulative forecast variations will result in a net reduction of £1,634,000.

In relation to Housing Capital Expenditure the new variations show an increase of £89,000. This is due to expenditure on environmental enhancements being estimated at £120,000 greater than previously reported, although overall there is a reduction of £180,000 on the originally approved budget of £500,000. This increase has been offset by rephasing of £31,000 of social housing grant schemes into 2002/03.

The Housing Revenue Account new variations show a net expenditure increase of £133,000, which will result in a estimate balance at 31 March 2002 of £2.333M.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That approval be given to capital expenditure of £398,000 for Highways Agency Works, £210,000 for the CCTV Programme and £120,000 for Housing Environmental Enhancements; and***
- (b) *That approval be given for supplementary estimates of £20,000 for increased grounds maintenance costs and £120,000 revenue contribution for Environmental Enhancements.***

12. PLANNED MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME 2002/2003 (REPORT F – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 197)

The Cabinet has considered and recommended approval of a programme of individual schemes, which comprise of the Planned Maintenance Improvements Programme and the Environmental Improvements Programme.

The progress of each scheme during the financial year will be reported to members in the Information Bulletin.

Within the Planned Maintenance Improvement Programme, the work proposed is broadly in line with that of previous years. The prime purpose of the expenditure is to maintain the fabric of Council homes and to ensure that services such as electrical and heating installations are maintained in a safe condition and replaced when necessary.

Tenants and residents are involved in all aspects of the work that affects their homes. Tenants are kept aware of the proposed works and, to ensure that any inconvenience and disruption is kept to a minimum, where choice can be given without compromising the effectiveness or the necessity of the work this will be done. Choice can mean the tenant electing not to have the work done, or in selecting finishes and colour schemes if and when improvements are carried out. Generally no choice is given in areas such as re-roofing which involves essential maintenance work. Many of the aspects of work identified will improve the security of tenants' homes.

In the programme for 2002/03 there are four areas where tenants will be asked for their views as to priorities and to the work that will be carried out. These are the areas of security works, environmental works, kitchen and bathroom modernisations and hard-standings.

A new element of subsidy known as the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) was introduced on the 1 April 2001. This allowance represents the annual cost of maintaining and improving the Council's housing stock to a standard equivalent to a modern, newly designed property. This new annual allowance is designed to fund major repairs and improvements over the life of a property. The MRA for NFDC for 2002/2003 has been set by the DTLR at £582.33 per property, a total of £3,156,810. An additional contribution of £1,960,000 from the HRA has been made to the MRA to ensure that previously identified backlogs of work can also be tackled commencing in 2002/2003.

This will allow the Council to carry out planned maintenance and improvement works to help meet the Government's 'Decent Homes Standards' and to achieve the targets set out in the ten year Planned Maintenance Programme.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the schemes listed in Appendices 2 and 3 of this report be approved as the planned maintenance and improvements programme and environmental improvement programme for 2002/2003;**
- (b) That a virement of £227,000 be made from the Planned Maintenance Programme (decreasing it to £4,879,810) to the Cyclical budget (increasing that to £977,000); and**

- (c) *That the budget for elderly persons internal redecorations be increased by £5,000 from within the overall programme to £30,000.*

13. FLEET MANAGEMENT – ALTERNATIVE FUELLED VEHICLES (REPORT G – 8 APRIL) (MINUTE NO. 198)

Within the commercial vehicle market there are a number of alternative fuel and vehicle options currently available. Diesel engines are currently the most fuel efficient for the full range of the Council's vehicle fleet and have a lower capital cost. Advances in diesel engine technology have substantially reduced exhaust gas pollutants and this can be further improved by the fitment of Continuously Regenerating Traps (CRT's) in the exhaust system.

The Cabinet have agreed to the principle of fitting the CRT's to replacement refuse collection vehicles within the agreed Capital Programme, commencing with two vehicles in 2002/03. The cost of fitting a CRT is £3,700 per vehicle which equates to an additional £590 per annum on a seven year lease. Whilst this commits the Council to future lease costs these can be offset in the main by a reduction of £500 in annual excise duty and the balance of £90 per vehicle can be funded from within existing budgets.

Recent discussions with the Energy Savings Trust have identified a grant scheme which potentially could finance 75% of the purchase and fitting cost of a CRT. This combined with the 55% reduction in excise duty could produce a net annual saving of approximately £350 per large goods vehicle. This will require further discussions with the Energy Savings Trust and the Cabinet has agreed that this should be pursued.

14. PUBLICITY FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS – NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATION (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 199)

The Council in April 2001 agreed that a six month trial of reducing newspaper publicity to the statutory minimum with neighbour notification and site notes in all cases would be introduced as soon as possible. The trial started on 3 October 2001.

In the first four months of the trial period 900 applications were subject to the new procedures. In each case the directly adjacent property, and those opposite across the road, to an application site, have received a letter advising them of the proposals, how they can view and make comments on it, and some general guidance on what are relevant planning considerations.

The Planning Officer when visiting the site also posts a green site notice adjacent to all application sites and in addition may consider that additional neighbours need notifying.

In addition to these procedures some applications also require newspaper publicity under statutory requirements which the Council must pay for.

The trial arrangements are considered to have been successful, not only introducing neighbour notification, but also retaining green site notices.

The Cabinet has therefore agreed that the neighbour notifications should be retained as a permanent part of the Council's publicity arrangements for planning applications. In addition a green site notice should continue to be posted on all sites by planning staff but newspaper publicity of applications should only be undertaken in those cases where there is a statutory requirement.

The trial scheme has put considerable pressure on staffing resources, and, in order for the scheme to be permanently maintained, one extra FTE post is required. This will be done by the replacement of one full time post with four part-time (18.5 hour) posts.

In order to fund the arrangements permanently the Cabinet have agreed that £20,000 should be vired from the applications publicity budget, of which £15,000 will be transferred to the staffing budget and the balance of £5,000 to postage and stationery budgets.

**15. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (REPORT I – 8 APRIL)
(MINUTE NO. 200)**

The Council has been participating in the Local Government Improvement Programme (LGIP) which consists of three peer review visits and reports. The first two of these visits have already taken place and the third and final visit is scheduled for Wednesday, 17 April 2002.

The single day event is seen as an important part of the overall programme and as such a large number of people, (approximately 40 to 60) will be involved. The basic structure will be a workshop involving representatives from front line employees, middle and senior managers, members and external partners.

Following their visit in June 2000, the Peer Review Team issued a report on the Council's performance against the benchmark of a 'Ideal' local authority. The Cabinet has now considered and agreed the latest draft assessment of the Council's position against the previous recommendations.

The third visit will review progress against the recommendations of the original report. The Cabinet has agreed that the following three key achievements should be highlighted:-

- Council Leadership in developing the Local Strategic Partnership
- Streamlining of the Best Value process without loss of rigour
- Substantial delivery of Electronic Governance Targets

The Cabinet has also agreed the following three outstanding areas for improvement:-

- The need for clearer priorities in the medium term financial strategy
- Further development of the Scrutiny process
- Further improvements in internal and external communications

The LGIP has encouraged the Council to assess itself against the benchmark of an 'Ideal' local authority and has provided an external view on the Council's overall performance. The Council's early participation in this programme is seen by Audit and Inspection as a positive step to take. It has provided the impetus for the Council to move forward in certain areas and will help the Council in its future Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) which is likely to take place in the Autumn of 2003.

**16. SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF POWERS (REPORT J – 8 APRIL)
(MINUTE NO. 201)**

To conduct the Council's business as efficiently and promptly as possible, the Council operates an extensive scheme of delegations of powers to officers. The scheme of delegations of powers to officers was reviewed in October 2001 to bring into effect the establishment of the leader and cabinet style of decision making under the Local Government Act 2000. Since that time the guidance issued by the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions has evolved, particularly in the area of the functions which should or should not be carried out by the Executive. The scheme of delegations has therefore been reviewed in the light of the evolving situation, both with that legislation, and other changes that have taken place in the intervening period.

Major changes have not been made to the scheme of delegations. Instead, many of the amendments are of a technical nature, reflecting the changes that have been brought about under the new legislation governing executive decision making arrangements. The Cabinet has agreed that the revised scheme of delegation of powers to officers as detailed in the report to them should be adopted with immediate effect.

The Council, elsewhere on the Agenda, is being asked to agree other aspects of the scheme of delegations reserved to them.

**17. FORMER WEBBS FACTORY SITE, LYMINGTON : DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY
PLANNING GUIDANCE – RESULTS OF CONSULTATION (REPORT K – 8 APRIL)
(MINUTE NO. 202)**

Following consideration of the results of the recent consultation on Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for the former Webbs Factory Site, Bridge Road, Lyminster, the Cabinet has agreed changes to the guidance and have formally adopted the SPG.

The Cabinet noted that there was substantial support for securing public access as part of the redevelopment of the site and, in particular, through the provision of a pedestrian footpath along the waterside. A link from the site to the town centre and town quay was viewed as important to the viability of the site.

Some concern was expressed over the economic viability of the mix of proposed uses with the agents for the site owners, in particular, seeking a much larger element of housing than the 25% of developable site area stipulated in the guidance. This figure was however supported by Lyminster and Pennington Town Council and the Cabinet has confirmed their support for this percentage figure.

Although there was some concern about the types of industrial use which might locate onto the site, the provision of industrial units suitable for small local industries, especially marine related activities, were supported by a number of respondents.

Cllr S A Hayes
CHAIRMAN

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