

Report of Review Panels

for 2007/08



REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANELS FOR 2007/08

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1** This year the Panels have faced a number of significant challenges. Firstly, following the District Council elections in May 2007, the Panels had a high proportion of new Members. Most Panels had about 50% of their Members with little knowledge of the subject area. This was further compounded by the creation of the new Employment, Health and Wellbeing Review Panel, and the adjustment of Economy and Planning to become the new Planning and Transportation Review Panel. The Environment and Housing Panels lost elements of their functions as the Review Panel structure was aligned to the content of the new Portfolios. This has increased opportunities for the Panels to develop closer working relationships with their Portfolio Holders and to act as a better resource for undertaking research and providing advice.
- 1.2** An inevitable consequence of the change in Panel memberships has been the need to provide training on the topic areas under the control of each Panel. In addition to presentations, a number of the Panels have visited key sites, both within this District and beyond. For example the Housing and Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters Review Panels both visited representative sites in the District to allow them to gain firsthand impressions of the services being provided and the practical problems that the Council faces. The Environment Review Panel travelled more extensively to visit key waste handling and recycling sites and also visited the Southampton Oceanography Centre to look at coastal protection issues for this District and regionally.
- 1.3** Following on from the training and orientation sessions, each of the Panels has spent time developing their work programmes. Dedicated workshop sessions have allowed the Panels to explore the services within their remit and to start to identify topics in which they need to take a more specific interest.
- 1.4** Despite the inevitable delays that this process has caused, the Panels have managed to progress some key reviews. The Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters Review Panel hosted two major events, involving representatives from outside bodies and the community. Both sessions concentrated on the needs of young persons in accessing leisure activities, in recognition that this will have a long term role in delivering a number of key targets in the Corporate Plan. The Crime and Disorder Review Panel have focussed on aspects of emergency planning and, following on from their initial work, will remain actively engaged in the process of determining how the emergency planning function should be delivered following the end of the current Service Level Agreement with the County Council.
- 1.5** A number of reviews that had been started prior to the May elections have continued under the newly appointed Panels. The Corporate Overview Panel, for example, has overseen progress on the Communications Strategy, which has now been remitted to the Lead Scrutiny Members for longer term overview. The Environment Panel continues its work on waste minimisation and optimising recycling performance. The Planning and Transportation Review Panel has taken on the role of involvement in the development of the Council's Core Strategy and initiated research on parking and transportation provision.

1.6 The Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters Review Panel undertakes an annual review of the outcome of the work that it has done during the year and the recommendations that it has made. This is the only Panel that takes a structured approach to reviewing its own effectiveness. The Corporate Overview Panel has recently examined its work programme over the last 4 years to identify, in particular, why various work programme suggestions had not been pursued. Other Panels, such as Crime and Disorder, agree amendments to their work programme, including a review of the causes of any slippages, at each meeting. In general terms though, this is an area in which the Panels may want to bring greater focus, not least for the benefits that reviewing their own performance will bring to their longer term effectiveness.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND LEAD SCRUTINY MEMBERS

2.1 Lead scrutiny members have been appointed to each service area. There has been a greater level of continuity in Lead Scrutiny Member appointments than in Panel membership, but there are still a significant number who are learning about their service areas, which has been taking a high proportion of their "lead scrutiny" time.

2.2 Each service area is evolving its own liaison arrangements for keeping its lead scrutiny members informed about key developments. In general terms, contact with lead scrutiny members is focussing around the service plans and is more active when, for example, there is a major review of the plan. Quarterly or biannual meetings seem to be a common pattern, supplemented by informal contact by telephone or e-mail to keep the lead scrutiny members aware of new developments. Face to face meetings provide the best avenue through which the members can actively question the officers and provide an essential element of constructive challenge. Some lead scrutiny members have much more frequent contacts, often informal, and request reports to be prepared and taken to the Panel. Other frequent contact patterns include direct involvement in events to promote the Council's objectives – for example the "Safer Food Better Business" seminars.

2.3 Other members have been less active or not become involved at all. It may therefore be useful for all the Panels to review, in the coming year, how its own lead scrutiny arrangements are working and, where necessary, to adjust representation or perhaps encourage a more dynamic process.

2.4 The development of the role of lead scrutiny members has diverted a lot of the performance management role of the Panels away from ordinary meetings, reducing their length. For the most part, performance information is now reported formally only when there is a specific need such as the finalisation of a service plan or some specific deviation from projected performance. The Panels do however all continue to receive an annual report on performance against key targets, and to have the opportunity to influence the key targets for the coming year. This allows an opportunity for a wider comparison and debate amongst members.

3 EXPENDITURE PLANS

- 3.1** As in last year, the Panels have continued to try to establish a clear role in the expenditure plan process. While there are mechanisms for the Panel and Lead Scrutiny Members to make suggestions and to comment on the draft proposals, perceptions remain that the Review Panels have little influence over the Council's expenditure priorities, through this process. Previously expressed concerns about the lack of information on expenditure plan proposals that have already been excluded, prior to consideration by the Panels, appear to be continuing. As a consequence, few suggestions are made about the proposals that do come to the Panels.
- 3.2** Reviews carried out by the Panels often have cost implications that feed into the expenditure plan process during the early stages

4. CALL INS

- 4.1** There has only been one call-in during the current year, continuing the trend of little or no activity of this kind. In general terms, more contentious decisions continue to be the subject of consultations between the Portfolio Holder and the Panel before a decision is taken, which removes any subsequent need for the issue to be called in.

5. NOTICE OF MOTION

- 5.1** The Council referred one Notice of Motion, on Council Tax charges for second homes, to the Corporate Overview Panel for their comments. This allowed the issues to be explored in more depth than would have been the case if the Motion had been debated at Full Council.

6. GREEN AUDIT

- 6.1** The Green Audit is a major area of work for the Council. A Green Audit Project Board was appointed by the Cabinet to undertake the work, which is under the area of responsibility of the Environment Review Panel. That Panel has appointed Members to serve on the Project Board. The focus of the work to date has been on the Council's own processes and operations. The Environment Panel, and because of the widespread implications for the Council's own operations, the Corporate Overview Panel, have both maintained a watching brief. As the work of the Board progresses, other Panels may become involved, particularly once the focus shifts outwards, building partnerships within the community and with businesses and industries.

7. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN KEY MEMBERS AND SENIOR OFFICERS

7.1 Over recent months the Council has introduced a new senior management structure as a result of the fundamental review which was undertaken in 2007. The Panel Chairmen are looking forward to continuing to work with Dave Yates and John Mascall; and now also with Bob Jackson as well as the Heads of

Service that are now in place. One of the responsibilities for all the Review Panels over the coming months will be to review the effect of these changes and to assess the outcome of the review on the services for which they are responsible to ensure the delivery of the benefits that the process should bring for the Council itself, and for our Council Taxpayers, as well as for the Staff and services of the Council.

Councillor John Ward

Chairman Corporate Overview Panel



CORPORATE OVERVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. MAJOR ITEMS CONSIDERED

1.1 Communications Strategy

The Panel has been monitoring the progress of various aspects of the Communications Strategy through the Action Plan currently underway, which features the following main sections:-

- E-Communication (internal and external)
- Corporate Communications Unit
- Corporate Standards (written, spoken, visual, behavioural)
- Council Culture
- Community Bridging

The Panel noted progress reports on each of these elements and has now left it to the relevant Lead Scrutiny members to make exception reports to the Panel as and when they feel it appropriate as issues arise.

1.2 Annual Employee Report 2006/7

The Panel received its annual report detailing employee trends and information, for 2006/07. It was found that employee turnover had increased in recent years in terms of "voluntary leavers" and "dismissals", although this increase was partly due to the way in which this information was recorded, and also to the nature of the business, since turnover was higher in Health and Leisure Centres.

Members discussed the various means of monitoring by managers and action taken once sick leave reached certain levels.

COP will continue to monitor employee trends and refine the nature of information gathered so as to provide the best possible benchmarking and year on year trend comparisons.

1.3 Partnership Working – Allocation of Grants / Outside Body Membership

In recent years the Panel has, at various stages, expressed an interest in monitoring or examining its partnerships with external partners and outside bodies with which it has involvement. The Panel recently received a presentation on Local Area Agreements from a representative of Hampshire County Council, details of the latter are shown below.

The Panel has reviewed the grants which the Council makes to various organisations, and District Council memberships of outside bodies as a first step in reviewing whether these activities were worthwhile. In respect of membership on outside bodies, Members felt there should be more feedback from these activities.

In respect of the larger grants made to external bodies, the Panel was aware that the Council had tried to make clear the relationships with other organisations, including the use of Service Level Agreements where appropriate, so that both parties knew what was expected. Most of these agreements had been reported to Review Panels at various stages.

The Panel has agreed that Citizens' Advice Bureau and Community First representatives be invited to attend future Corporate Overview Panel meetings to give presentations on how their organisations work, following completion of the HCC review of core funding of Community Voluntary Services.

The Panel has appointed a Working Group comprising of Cllrs Mrs Robinson, Pemberton and Hutchins to consider the outside bodies to which District Councillors were appointed at present, and to gauge the value and benefits derived from the Council being involved in these bodies. This Working Group has met and decided to write both to organisations and the District Council representatives to ascertain expectations and benefits for both parties involved. Progress reports will be made to subsequent meetings.

1.4 ICT Strategy (Presentation)

The Panel received a presentation on the ICT Strategy for 2008/2012. This set out the aims and objectives of the strategy, which provided a long-term plan for ICT development, included direction on ICT investment, and would refresh ICT policies and standards.

Members noted the various elements, aims and objectives of the Strategy, including:-

- Use of new technology
- Business themes
- Post E-governance era plans
- Financial and organisational constraints
- Implementation steps
- The formation of an ICT Investment Panel (Dragons' Den)
- Details of the Work Programme

The Strategy Document and Action Plan would be finalised by the end of February 2008, before being formally adopted and implemented from April 2008.

1.5 Performance Management

The Panel has continued with its role in monitoring the overall performance of the Council. No particular issues of concern were raised when considering the Council's performance including Key Achievements for 2007/8 or the draft targets for 2008/09.

1.6 Local Area Agreements

The Panel received a presentation from Robert Ormerod, Community Strategy Manager, Hampshire County Council, on Local Area Agreements (LAAs) from the County Council's perspective. The Hampshire LAA consists of a number of agreed priorities, targets and performance indicators for the area of Hampshire. These are agreed with the Government Office and submitted to the Secretary of State. It was noted that many LAA priorities linked well with the Sustainable Community Strategy for the District, for example Children and Young People.

Although the LAA was seen as important, it was recognised that much of the Council's work would be delivered outside of this process. There may, however, be some issues relating to funding where LAA and local priorities were different.

The Panel expressed some concerns about a perceived lack of member involvement at all levels, and it was hoped this would soon be addressed as governance arrangements were put in place. The Panel wished to ensure that all of this Council's Review Panels were made aware of those aspects of the LAA that related to their Portfolio, so that progress from a different perspective can be properly monitored. The Panel will be reviewing the position in late 2008/early 2009, perhaps again in conjunction with the County Council, and will be examining ways through which the District Council's contributions to the LAA can be properly assessed.

2. OTHER ISSUES CONSIDERED

- Annual Report on the Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2006/7
- Treasury Management Performance Report 1 April – October 2007
- Complaints Annual Review 2006/7
- Contract Standing Orders – Waivers granted 2006/7
- Expenditure Plans 2008/9
- Revenue and Capital Estimates 2008 /9
- Corporate Consultations – Including Citizen's Panel and Young People's Panel
- Enhancing Council Tax Collections

3. MOTION FROM COUNCIL – COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES

The Panel considered the following motion which was referred to it by full Council:

“That this Council makes representations to the appropriate Government Minister to raise the upper limit of Council Tax on second homes to a level twice the basic rate.”

The Panel was very sympathetic with the intentions behind the Motion, given the adverse effect that second homes had on local communities, but a number of practical considerations were acknowledged which may have a bearing on how the issue might be progressed.

The Panel therefore agreed that the Cabinet and Council should be recommended to make representations to the Government and the LGA, calling for councils to be given all the necessary powers to tackle the problems relating to second homes in their localities.

4. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Lead Scrutiny members continue to shoulder much of the detailed work of the Panel. The Panel has a high number of Service areas within its remit, and much routine work is undertaken by Lead Scrutiny members outside the formal meetings of the Panel.

There is work to do around Communications and ICT, and scrutiny will continue in these important areas. We have recently received a presentation from the County Council on Local Area Agreements, which highlighted some issues for the District which we will work on in the coming year.

The Panel has recently reviewed its work programme over the last 4 years of operation. A number of interesting future issues are currently being pursued, and the Panel will shortly be holding its annual Work Programme Seminar, which involves identifying and prioritising further items for scrutiny, as well as reviewing its overall direction.

I would like to thank all members of the panel of both political groups, for their input and ongoing involvement. Many of course already have their own responsibilities, particularly as Chairmen of other Panels. Finally I thank Dave Yates all the Council Officers that have been involved directly and often indirectly with aspects of work appertaining to the Panel. Particular thanks must go to Andy Rogers, the Committee Administrator.

Cllr John Ward

Chairman Corporate Overview Panel



CRIME AND DISORDER REVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. MAJOR AREAS OF INTEREST

1.1 Fear of Crime and Community Engagement

This was an area of work which had been initiated prior to the District Council elections in May, and had been overseen by a small task and finish working group led by Cllr M S Wade. They had undertaken extensive research, including the use of a specially designed questionnaire for the Citizen's Panel. One of the ideas that they developed was to hold meetings of the Crime Panel in the community, on a regular basis, to allow communities to raise their concerns and also to allow the dissemination of the message that this was a very safe place to live. In the meantime, the Government released proposals for Crime and Disorder Review Panels to be responsible for scrutinising the activities of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and also creating a requirement for them to actively engage with their communities. It is likely that this will include meetings with the public, and possible that the membership of the Panel may need to be widened by the co-option of representatives from organisations on the CDRP. The government's guidance has been delayed and until this has been received the Panel cannot realistically put any arrangements in place as they would almost certainly have to be amended. The Panel has maintained a watching brief on the publication of the guidance and included this issue in their work programme so that it may be addressed as soon as possible.

1.2 CCTV

The contract for the maintenance of the CCTV system has been put out to EU tender. In addition to briefing themselves on the operation of the CCTV system, including a visit to the control room, the Panel is keeping the tender process under review in order to learn any lessons that may be drawn from the process. The tender documentation also includes costed options for extending the system, should funding become available, and the Panel wish to be in a position to advise the Cabinet on any such proposals, should they come forwards in due course.

1.3 Emergency Planning – Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the County Council

The Panel considered a report on the problems that had been experienced in achieving the delivery of the service promised by the County Council for the delivery of this Council's emergency planning obligations. This is a statutory requirement upon the Council and the decision had previously been taken that the most cost effective option was to join a consortium of other Hampshire Districts who commissioned the service from the County Council. The Panel concurred with the officer's views that other options should now be explored for the continuation of this service after the expiration of the SLA in 2009. Two Councillors have been appointed to keep a watching brief on the research and to assist as necessary.

1.4 Parish Speedwatch Projects

This topic was considered by the Panel prior to the May elections and was pursued further following the publication of the report into the trial schemes that had been run in 3 parishes in Hampshire, including Lyndhurst. Sadly, Parish Speedwatch projects did not bring any significant benefits in addressing speeding behaviour and the Panel supported the County Council's conclusions that this was not a cost effective option. They supported the introduction of other initiatives such as young driver programmes that widened the skills and sense of responsibility of newly qualified drivers. The County Council currently subsidised the cost of such courses.

1.5 Bullying on the Way to and from School

This topic was brought forward and researched by Cllr McEvoy. The objective was to establish whether there was a problem and, if so, what agencies could be encouraged to play a part in its resolution. Councillor McEvoy's research, aided by a Young Person's Panel questionnaire, established that there was indeed a problem with bullying on the way to and from school. Her research had then gone on to look at whether there were any measures being developed in the District that could be used as a template for an effective response. The most co-ordinated approach appeared to be through the Handy Trust that had been established by Hythe and Dibden Parish Council following their development of a policy to address youth issues in their area. The Panel discussed the issues in detail and established that, in many areas, a lot of time and resources were going towards youth issues to try and help, but a lack of co-ordination was hampering the efforts. The strength of the Handy Trust was the use of a Youth worker who had a wide range of contacts that allowed her to identify problems, for example with bullying on journeys for school, and to draw in the necessary resources to seek a resolution. It was agreed that this co-ordinated approach appeared to have some merits that warranted further investigation. The Handy Trust's Youth Worker is being invited to give a presentation to a future meeting of the Panel.

1.6 101 Emergency Number and Funding of Community Safety Partnerships

The 101 emergency number was introduced in Hampshire as one of the pilots to try to divert pressure off the 999 emergency number. Following the withdrawal of Government funding, there has been considerable debate in Hampshire about whether to continue to fund this number. Countywide, the District Councils are very divided in their views. The County Council has put funding into the continuation of the 101 contact number until March 2009, and also for some research to establish its effectiveness. This has in turn caused considerable controversy as the County Council's contribution has been taken from government funding that should have been directed towards supporting the activities of District-based Community Safety Partnerships. The Panel has asked the Leader of the Council to raise the wider issue of Partnership Funding directly with the Leader of the County Council and are monitoring progress in research to establish the value of the 101 service so they may advise the Portfolio Holder on whether this Council should fund it in future.

2. OTHER ITEMS WHERE AN ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED OR INFORMATION GATHERED

2.1 Safer Neighbourhoods

This is an important initiative by the Police which "ring fences" some police resource to be available to tackle the lower level crime and anti-social behaviour that nonetheless has a significant impact on quality of life. The Panel received a presentation from the Chief Inspector responsible for developing Safer Neighbourhoods Policing in the District.

2.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

The Panel received a presentation from the Acceptable Behaviour Contracts Officer on the early intervention and other work that is done to address anti-social behaviour and prevent escalation into criminal behaviour. The Panel remain strongly supportive of a positive, proactive approach that encourages alternative, more constructive patterns of behaviour from people of all ages who are causing problems in their communities.

2.3 FOSPLAN and the Buncefield Report

The Panel have been keen to learn from the findings of the Inquiry into the explosion at the Buncefield Oil Storage depot, bearing in mind the implications for the industries along the waterside and this District's emergency plans. The lack of active feedback on such issues had been one of the concerns about the service being provided by the County Council on emergency planning. The Panel received a presentation from one of the County Council's Emergency Planning team on the Inquiry Report. They were reassured that work had already started to take forward the recommendations of the Buncefield Inquiry. FOSPLAN, which guides the off site emergency response for 6 major industrial sites along the Waterside is just about to be reviewed on its normal 3 yearly cycle and will incorporate as many of the new measures as possible, although many of the Inquiry recommendations require the publication of guidance from the Health and Safety Executive before they can be progressed. One of the lessons to be learned from Buncefield was that the effects of a major incident could be much greater than previous experience had indicated, and revised incident projections were therefore needed. On a positive note, the oil storage depot at the Fawley refinery did not have the same proximity to other industrial premises and homes as had been the case at Buncefield, and there were also well established on-site procedures that had not been in place at Buncefield.

2.4 Emergency Response to the Fire at Hythe Boatyard

The Panel were briefed on how the emergency response to this incident had been handled and the lessons that should be learnt for the future. In general terms the emergency response had been adequate and efficient. The County Council's officers on the ground had been excellent, notwithstanding the problems that had been experienced with policy delivery through the SLA. There had been some practical problems with providing temporary accommodation for the people who had been evacuated and these would be addressed for future incidents.

3. PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORTS

The Portfolio Holder attends most meetings of the Panel and makes a formal report on his activities over the period since the last meeting. As most of the activity on community safety is achieved in partnership with, or directly by, other bodies the Panel find that this is very useful as it keeps them up to date with developments in various areas of work and also allows them to discuss specific areas of concern with the Portfolio Holder, including asking him to pursue issues or areas of concerns through the various meetings he attends.

The Portfolio Holder also reported on a visit that he had held to the Bridge project run by the Society of St James in Eastleigh that addresses drug and alcohol dependence problems in the community. The Society of St James wished to open a similar project to serve the western part of this District.

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 Lead Scrutiny Members

The Panel's Lead Scrutiny Members continue to meet the officers to discuss key issues affecting the service.

5. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The year has seen the Panel focussing on wide and varied areas of both interest and concern. The visit to the CCTV control room was fascinating and the presentation of the findings of the Inquiry into the explosion at the Buncefield Oil Storage depot provided many lessons that we can learn from. However, it is the ongoing problem of community safety issues that continue to hold our attention. It seems slightly ironic that just as we are getting to grips with addressing these problems, the funding stream from the Government is being held up by the County Council. I sincerely hope that this financial impasse can be equitably resolved to enable the District Council to continue to deliver its community safety function in and around the New Forest.

Cllr Alexis McEvoy BSc (Hons)

Vice-Chairman, Crime and Disorder Review Panel



EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING REVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Creation of Panel

The Terms of Reference of the new Employment Health and Wellbeing Review Panel (EHWP) were agreed by the Council in May 2007, with the first 'proper' Panel meeting held the following June. The functions falling under the ambit of the Panel are, in outline:

- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Food /Infectious Disease/Commercial Environmental Health
- Health Policy
- Environmental Protection

2. PRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF EXTERNAL BODIES

2.1 Practice Based Commissioning (PBC)

The Panel received a presentation from Mr Dean Garrett, Interim Head of PCB at the Hampshire NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT).

Given the anticipated impact of Practice Based Commissioning on the NHS, it was felt important that the Panel become familiar with the topic at an early date. The Panel was advised that it could assist by scrutinising the provision plans in conjunction with the Area Professional Advisory Committee. (APAC). This has yet to be done, but this may be a future work programme item once some of the familiarisation work is completed.

2.2 New Forest Business Partnership

The Panel received a presentation from Mr Barry Olorenshaw, Chairman of the New Forest Business Partnership. The presentation focused on the Partnership's work and its relationship with the Council.

The Panel noted that 45% of local authority income was from the business sector, which had no direct influence on councils, which was a key reason why business partnerships came into being. The New Forest Business Partnership was launched in May 2002 and represented between 10% and 12% of the businesses in the Forest. There were 5,730 VAT registered businesses in the New Forest, approximately 3,400 of which operated in towns, and 2,300 in rural areas. 4,500 businesses employed four or less people. Businesses welcomed the opportunity to work with the Council. Over recent years the NFBP has had a great deal of involvement in the Local Development Framework and Core Strategy.

As well as being a general information gathering session, the presentation served to put aspects of the Council's Economic Development activities into context, and it is hoped that the Panel will revisit this topic at future meetings.

3. CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED

3.1 Older People's Wellbeing Strategy

The Panel considered a draft Hampshire County Council Strategy document on Older People's Wellbeing, and made a number of observations to inform the Portfolio Holder's response to the consultation:-

- Older people's fears about crime and vulnerability
- Feeding in hospitals
- Provision of gardeners and handymen
- Carers' network
- A need to keep people in their own homes for as long as possible
- Focusing on dementia issues
- Transport
- The aspiration of helping older people become IT literate and some form of assistance with provision of computers

This was an especially topical and timely item given that the Council's new Corporate Plan makes "Older People" a more focused priority for the Council, as the New Forest has both the biggest growth in need in Hampshire, and the biggest need overall. The Panel agreed that the topic of the Older People's Strategy could be a future item for the Panel's Work Programme, which may involve inviting people in to give evidence on the Council's services and how they affect older people in the District.

3.2 Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board

The Panel also considered a County Council consultation paper on the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board for the New Forest, which would be an important mechanism for improving joint working between this Council and the Primary Care Trust.

The Panel received a presentation by the Health Policy Development Manager on the aims and objectives of the Partnership Board and its relationship with this Council and other bodies. The Panel has asked for regular updates on the work of the Board, including final details of the proposed membership.

3.3 Community Meals

The Panel considered the proposed Meals on Wheels price for 2008/9, and also discussed the future options under consideration by Hampshire County Council, for a wider review of the Community Meals Service. Initial feedback was given by the Panel, and a more detailed consultation will be undertaken by the County Council during their Review.

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT / SERVICE PLANS

There were no particular issues of concern in the Key Achievements for 2007/8.

The Panel has considered the draft Economic Development Service Plan, and the Food Safety Service Plan. As is common practice among the other review panels, the Panel has agreed that, rather than receiving service plans at their meetings as a matter of course, the lead Scrutiny Members for each service will liaise with Service Heads and bring reports to the Panel on an exceptions basis as and when issues arise.

5. JOINT MEETING

5.1 Meeting with Planning Transportation Panel – 1 August 2007

In August 2007, the Panel held a special joint meeting with the also new Planning and Transportation Review Panel, to consider proposed new governance arrangements for the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). The meeting considered the establishment of formal joint arrangements with 10 other local authorities in Hampshire. PUSH had existed for 4 years though only as an informal body. Although there were some concerns about adding to bureaucracy, members felt it was in the Council's best interests to be in the Partnership, so as to maintain influence over decision making. The meeting recommended that the proposed governance arrangements be supported, as well for continued cross party working in connection with PUSH.

6. SUMMARY OF WORK SO FAR

Given the newness of the Panel and that half of its membership comprises newly elected councillors, it is appropriate that the Panel's first 5 meetings have been largely taken up with information gathering and familiarisation with its service areas. Having appointed new Lead Scrutiny Members for each of the above areas, the Panel had its first discussion on its future work programme items in June, with a pretty even split between Health and Economic Development as regards chosen topic areas. The Panel have received talks from a number of external speakers and dealt with some complex material, particularly with the consultation papers it has considered.

The Panel is currently pursuing various Health – related topics over the next few meetings, including the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), the Out of Hours Service, and the Ambulance Service.

7. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

I am pleased that this new Panel has made good progress over the past year in getting to grips with the subject matter, and developing interesting and worthwhile agenda items. The Lead Scrutiny Members have been developing their roles well in conjunction with service heads and it has been agreed that Lead Scrutiny Members for each service will in general monitor services and service plans on behalf of the Panel and make exception reports when appropriate. The Panel will continue to engage with its external partners and work with them and the Portfolio holder towards improving the lives of residents in the District. Whilst there is still more to be done on familiarisation with service areas, I am hopeful the Panel can now consider more in depth projects for scrutiny over the coming year. I would like to convey my thanks to my fellow Panel members and to officers for their help and support over the last 12 months and look forward to a productive year ahead.

Cllr A W Rice TD

Chairman, Employment Health and Social Wellbeing Panel



ENVIRONMENT REVIEW PANEL REPORT - 2007/08

1. MAJOR AREAS OF INTEREST

1.1 Review of Public Conveniences

The day-to-day maintenance and also the capital programme for the replacement of public conveniences were considered by the Panel at their meeting in September and a number of recommendations were made to the Portfolio Holder. A number of changes to the capital programme were proposed and the Portfolio Holder was recommended to decommission one public convenience at Fawley. Further research was commissioned at other venues.

In addition, based on evidence of problems with antisocial behaviour, the Panel recommended the inclusion of an expenditure plan bid to allow a return to the manual locking of conveniences, rather than reliance on an automated system.

1.2 Refuse Collection and Recycling Working Party

Once again the Panel has established a standing joint member and officer working party to look at some key issues relating to refuse collection and recycling performance in more detail. A number of topics are currently under consideration, including the assessment of the viability of the kerbside glass collection pilot schemes run elsewhere in the County. The Panel evaluated an offer from the manufacturer of tetrapaks to take part in a recycling project for their containers. The Working Party did not find that the project was viable and the Panel subsequently advised the Portfolio Holder that the economic and environmental arguments were not convincing, and this Council should not take part.

The Working Party have made a number of other useful suggestions that are being pursued, such as the establishment of better mechanisms for the sharing of ideas and best practice through Project Integra.

The main piece of work that the Working Party have started to focus on is the rationalisation of the Council's recycling bring sites, to optimise performance following the introduction of District Wide kerbside recycling collections for key materials. In addition, there is a need to develop a policy to guide permissions to install charity collection bins in the Council's car arks.

1.3 Using Materials More Efficiently – LAA Priority G

This is an aspirational target to drive forwards the performance of authorities in using materials more efficiently. The Panel evaluated the costs and benefits of participating and recommended to the Portfolio Holder that this Council should sign up to the Agreement and should also start to work on specific actions to deliver this Council's aspirations, such as the development of SMART targets.

1.4 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act

Over the last year, the Council has been implementing new powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. The Panel has now initiated a review of the implementation and its effectiveness. They also wish to research whether the public would favour a more pro-active approach with the issuing of more fixed penalty notices.

1.5 Cemeteries Regulations

The Panel has recently established a small working party to review the regulations that apply in cemeteries, and in particular lawn cemeteries, to try to make them more enforceable and practical. Meetings have just commenced and it is hoped that the review will be completed during 2008.

2. OTHER ITEMS WHERE AN ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED OR INFORMATION GATHERED

2.1 Waste Handling and Recycling Sites

As part of the overall training and orientation programme members visited a number of key sites for the handling of waste including the Marchwood Energy from Waste Plant, a Materials Recycling Facility, the glass recycling centre at Southampton docks and a garden waste composting site. This has allowed Members to gain a much better understanding of the practical constraints that apply in improving this Council's performance in waste minimisation and recycling.

2.2 Project Integra

Because of the importance of Project Integra in delivering this Council's statutory duty as a waste collection authority, the Panel devoted a meeting to finding out about the history, structure, funding and performance of the partnership.

2.3 SCOPAC Conference and Visit to Southampton Oceanography Centre

Cllr Carpenter, as one of the Lead Scrutiny Members for coastal issues, reported to members on a meeting of SCOPAC that she had attended. She brought some key issues to their attention, including the development of the national approach to coastal monitoring which had been developed in the Southeast, with strong involvement from Prof Bradbury, one of this Council's officers.

The Panel visited the Southampton Oceanography Centre to view at first hand some of the work that is being done on coastal defence, both in this District and in setting models for the national picture.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Lead Scrutiny Members

The Panel's Lead Scrutiny Members continue to meet the Assistant Directors in Commercial Services and the Portfolio Holder to discuss key issues affecting the service.

3.2 Performance Indicators

The Panel continues to monitor performance indicators and are happy with the performance of Housing Service.

4. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

I have welcomed several Members serving on this Panel for the first time, which has benefited greatly from their input and fresh approaches.

It has been a busy year which has seen a new Portfolio Holder and Officer structure with whom lead Members have been liaising. I thank all the Members of the Panel for their loyalty and hard work.

This coming year promises to be just as demanding, with many projects already under way.

Cllr Christine Ford

Chairman, Environment Review Panel



HOUSING REVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. MAJOR REVIEWS

1.1 Empty Homes

The Panel considered the actions for dealing with empty homes in the district. Members were pleased to hear from officers that the Housing Service worked hard to reduce the number of empty dwellings. This helped to reduce the housing waiting list and to prevent homelessness through bringing empty properties back into use by developing private sector leasing schemes.

The Panel felt that further reductions in the number of empty properties could be made by forming an Empty Properties Panel and were keen for officers to use as many approaches as necessary to reduce the number of empty homes in the district. The Panel will monitor the progress of the Empty Properties Panel and its impact on reducing the number of empty homes.

1.2 Housing Green Paper

The Panel discussed the proposals set out in the Government's Green Paper: Homes for the Future, More Affordable and More Sustainable. In discussing the proposals, members felt strongly that public sector housing should be required to meet the same sustainability building standards as private sector housing and that the Government should reflect this in appropriate legislation. The Cabinet reflected the Panel's comments in their response to the consultation document.

1.3 Supply of Land for Affordable Housing

Members considered ways in which the Council could maximise its delivery of affordable housing. The delivery of a joint planning preferred options document was discussed and members expressed their concern that the National Park Authority had withdrawn from joint partnership working.

The Panel considered how the Council could best utilize its assets to make money available for the supply of affordable housing. It felt that short term money fixes, such as selling sites to Housing Associations cheaply, were not always the wisest options and that, in the long term, this would impact on the Council's finances. The Panel looked forward to the introduction of the Housing Green Paper which would help the Council explore new building models.

The Panel noted the constraints on the delivery of new affordable housing and supported the Cabinet in their proposals in the Core Strategy Preferred Options to increase land supply for affordable housing.

2. OTHER ITEMS WHERE AN ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED OR INFORMATION GATHERED

2.1 Statistics on Rough Sleepers

The Panel reviewed the quality of information held on rough sleeping and discussed various methods for accurately assessing the level of rough sleeping in the district. Members debated whether undertaking headcounts was a reliable way of obtaining this information, especially when considering the rural nature of the district and the fact that some New Forest residents would travel out of the Forest to sleep rough in neighbouring urban areas.

The Panel agreed that the most reliable mechanism for gathering information was the use of a Supported Housing Panel which brought together various agencies, such as the Police, to pool information. The Panel will monitor the progress of the Supported Housing Panel and will be advised of the numbers of rough sleepers every 6 months.

2.2 Rent Arrears

The Panel discussed the latest position with regard to the recovery of rent arrears from tenants of council housing and the development of the Rent Arrears Service. Both members and tenants were pleased to see that there had been a reduction in rent arrears and recognised that this was largely due to the restructuring of the service.

Members gave particular attention to the number of Notices of Seeking Possession Orders served, recognising that the officers took an holistic approach when dealing with rent arrears, balancing the number of evictions against the overall rent arrears performance. The Panel felt strongly that tenants should continue to receive support when facing financial difficulties.

The new systems in place to collect rent were discussed and both Panel members and the Tenants' Representatives agreed that the new direct debit scheme was an effective and efficient way of collecting rent from tenants.

The Review Panel will be updated on the performance of the Rent Arrears Service at a future meeting and will continue to monitor the assistance offered to tenants.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Housing Service Plans

The Panel's Lead Scrutiny Members continue to monitor the Housing Services Plan and meet with the Assistant Director and Senior Housing Officers of Housing Services to discuss key issues affecting the service.

3.2 Performance Indicators

The Panel continues to monitor performance indicators of the Housing Service. The Panel are happy with the performance of the Housing Service and are sympathetic to its problems regarding the provision of affordable housing and reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 Tour and Workshop

The Review Panel undertook a tour sampling a range of housing offered within the district so as to become more aware of the facilities being offered to tenants. The tour was preceded by a workshop whereby Members received presentations on issues affecting the Housing Service, in particular affordable housing, the housing waiting list and the housing revenue account. Members used key information from these presentations to develop their work programme.

A similar work programme workshop will be held in the early summer to further develop the Panel's work programme for 2008/09.

5. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

It is a great privilege to serve as Chairman of one of the Council's most important Review Panels. It not only manages a large amount of money but is responsible for the housing welfare of a great many people.

We are fortunate in having an excellent team of officers, led by Dave Brown, to whom I extend my heartfelt thanks for their dedicated and willing service.

Our particular tasks now are to continue to strive for more affordable housing and to use every resource available to reduce the number of families living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

I thank my Panel members for their enthusiastic support and salute our Portfolio Holder for her early success in fostering some very useful affordable housing.

Cllr Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
Chairman, Housing Review Panel



LEISURE, CULTURE AND YOUTH MATTERS REVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. MAJOR REVIEWS

1.1 Role of Leisure in Young People's Achievement

The Panel hosted a discussion with guests from the youth sector, including a small group of young people from the District, on the role of leisure in young peoples' achievements. The session produced a healthy debate on the role leisure played in the development of young peoples' lives, in terms of helping confidence levels and independence. The Panel reviewed the opportunities available for young people and how best to ensure that access to leisure was a rewarding experience. The young peoples' representatives raised some concerns about the cost and availability of transportation and the cost of leisure activities as potential barriers to accessing services. However, the Panel were pleased to hear that many young people were actively looking for an opportunity to take up leisure leadership roles. The session received positive feedback from all attendees. The findings of the session have been put forward to the Portfolio Holder for further consideration and action.

1.2 Health and Leisure Centre Procurement Review

The Panel considered the future delivery of the Health and Leisure Centre service and options for future procurement of the service. Options included the a new model for in-house service delivery or delivering the Health and Leisure Centre service through an external partnership.

The Review Panel considered the high standard to which the Council's leisure centres were currently running. The Panel was unanimous in its view that the Health and Leisure Centre service should be retained in-house to ensure that this quality of service is maintained.

The Panel made financial comparisons between commercial centres and the Council's own leisure centres and noted that there were proposed savings within the service, such as levels of staffing, operational management etc. The Assistant Director and the Portfolio Holder agreed to pursue the potential avenues for savings. The Panel will review the impact of the review on the management structure and general operational activities within centres at a future Panel meeting.

1.3 Improving Access for Young People to Leisure Facilities in Town Centres

The Panel hosted a discussion with guests from various organisations including the County Council, the Voluntary Sector and the Transport Sector on ways in which to improve access to leisure facilities for young people. During the session it became apparent that whilst there were various initiatives and projects running to provide low cost transport to leisure activities, the take up by young people was poor. This was also the case with public transport, where regular services and adequate routes were running throughout the district and neighbouring districts. It was recognised that better marketing and promotion, perhaps through a single information source, was necessary to promote the transport services available to young people. Incentives to use public transport, such as vouchers and discounts at leisure centres, were felt necessary to encourage young people to participate and engage in leisure pursuits. The findings of the session were put forward to the Portfolio Holder for consideration.

2. OTHER ITEMS WHERE AN ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED OR INFORMATION GATHERED

2.1 How Can Working Relationships with Town and Parish Councils on Leisure Matters Improve?

The Panel hosted a session to examine how working relationships with town and parish councils on leisure matters could be improved. Representatives from town and parish councils and from external organisations, such as the National Park Authority, attended the session and made valuable contributions to the debate. The findings from the session highlighted the need to review the Statement of Partnership Agreement between town and parish councils and this Council. It was considered that fresh impetus into this document would strengthen partnership working and communication. The possibility of developing an extra-net for town and parish councils to access and share information with the Council was also discussed. The findings from the session listed a number of action points to be considered by the Executive Management Team.

2.2 Conversion of Squash Court to 816 Gym

The Panel considered an option to convert the current squash court at Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre to enable the existing gym to be extended and to provide a new 816 gym.

Members examined the business plan for the project and were pleased to note that it gave a pay back within the Council's agreed five year period and also that a substantial increase in participation rates was projected.

There had been a great deal of consultation over the proposal which had resulted in support for both sides of the argument. The Panel listened in particular to the concerns of the Chairman of the Ringwood Squash Club. On balance, the Panel was of the view that the gym option should be pursued however, and requested the Officers to work with the Chairman of the Ringwood Squash Club to look at alternatives for squash provision in the area. The Cabinet subsequently endorsed the recommendations of the Review Panel.

2.3 Healthy Living Project

At the request of the Panel, members received a presentation on the progress of the Healthy Living Project. The Project aimed to increase participation in physical activity and reduce obesity levels. Members were pleased to hear that the Project had undertaken successful outreach work within the local community to actively engage them in physical activities. Various initiatives had been set up including a run for fun, pushchair power walks, cook and eat sessions, chair exercise classes, adopting a school and healthy walks. Participation in these schemes was high.

Members heard that outreach work in the community had also taken place within the Council's Health and Leisure centres to develop existing health programmes, and were also advised of the success of the 816 gyms. The Review Panel will continue to monitor the progress of the project.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Leisure Service Plan

The Panel's Lead Scrutiny Members continue to monitor the Leisure Services Plan and meet with the Assistant Directors of Leisure Services to discuss issues.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 Tour

Members attended a tour of Leisure facilities around the District which included visits to the Lymington and Applemore Health and Leisure Centres, Calshot and Eling Tide Mill. Members found the tour useful, in particular those new members of the Panel who were unfamiliar with facilities outside of their wards. The Panel recommended that future tours continue to take place.

4.2 Workshop

A workshop was organised to set the Panel's work programme for 2008/09. Members' discussions produced a varied list of issues which needed to be investigated by the Panel. Future issues to be discussed by the Panel include the Olympics, the effects of coastal capital projects on the leisure industry, sun bed provision, the relationship between leisure services and Hampshire PCT and reducing the number of sedentary adults in the District.

5. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

I am very pleased with the work the Panel has undertaken this year. The Panel has been proactive in seeking to obtain the views and concerns of users and this has helped shape the future delivery and provision of Leisure Services. The Panel has had several successful workshops attended in particular by young people of the District and has taken on board their comments regarding the provision of leisure activities for young people in the District.

The Panel has regularly reviewed and updated its work programme which has largely been informed by tours to key Council sites managed by Leisure Services as well as successful work programme workshops. The Panel has set a full work programme for next year and looks forward to undertaking these key reviews with the continued support and advice of the two Leisure Services Assistant Directors.

Cllr J A G Hutchins

Chairman, Leisure, Culture & Youth Matters Review Panel



PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION REVIEW PANEL - 2007/08

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Creation of Panel

The Planning and Transportation Review Panel superseded the Economy and Planning Review Panel, but does not include Economic Development, which has been transferred to new Panel (Employment Health and Wellbeing).

The functions falling under the Planning and Transportation Portfolio as agreed in May 2007 include:-

- Transportation
- Parking
- Building Control
- Development Control
- Environmental Design
- Concessionary Travel
- Local Land Charges
- Planning Strategy
- Street Naming and Numbering

This has been a very busy first year for the Panel. They have dealt with and advised on various topics, consultation papers and joint meetings.

2. ISSUES CONSIDERED

2.1 Call-in of Executive Decision – Council Response to Consultation on Hampshire Minerals Plan and Waste Development Framework – Issues and Options: Sites Discussion Paper

Following a 'Call-In', the Panel reviewed the decision of the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder to forward comments for the District Council's response to a Hampshire County Council (HCC) consultation paper on the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework – Issues and Options: Sites Discussion Paper.

After careful consideration of the issues, the Panel agreed that the Portfolio Holder should be requested to reconsider elements of the decision in the light of general comments made at the meeting.

2.2 Policy for the use of Commercial Premises in Town Centres

The Panel has examined the Council's policies in respect of the use of commercial premises in town centres.

The Panel had requested this information over concerns regarding (among other things) the effects of a potential economic slow-down, and internet shopping. Members had therefore sought data on occupancy levels in town centres and the extent of the Council's powers to boost economic activity in terms of relevant Regulations and various classifications of occupancy. In particular, Members were interested in whether the Council had the ability to re-designate the Town Centre Core areas and, if necessary, whether it could allow non-A1 uses in the A1 area.

The Policy Team undertook annual monitoring of the changes in town centres, and the key policy was to keep a minimum of 70% retail units in A1 use. The Council was currently refusing non-retail applications if the 70 % occupancy level had been breached. The Council had no control in terms of planning constraints over the type of A1 use, which included charity shops.

It was felt inadvisable to allow the reduction of retail use in core areas, as this would erode the 'critical mass' of retail outlets, thus threatening the viability of town centres.

A recent consultant's report had advised of the need for added retail floor space. In noting that report, the Panel requested an update report in September, to include the latest data on vacant shops in all town centres.

As with other aspects of planning policy, there may be an opportunity to re-examine these issues at a later date at a seminar to be arranged.

2.3 Scoping Paper for Consideration of Commissioning Surveys of Council Off-Street Car Parks

The Panel considered a scoping paper for consideration of whether or not to undertake surveys in off street car parks.

In considering the issue in detail, the Panel decided to recommend to the Cabinet that methodologies should be investigated by which ring-fenced monies might be raised to fund future parking provision. The Panel also recommended that appropriate funds should be identified to research a future transportation and parking strategy using Lymington as a pilot.

2.4 Hampshire Minerals Plan – Proposed Areas - Consultation

The Panel considered a consultation paper from Hampshire County Council on proposed areas for minerals extraction. Mr. Badley, of the County Council, gave a presentation on the Minerals Plan Consultation Document. The Panel's comments were forwarded to the Cabinet.

2.5 Supply of Data to Parish and Town Council by Electronic Means

The Panel is overseeing a project which will enable town and parish councils to review planning applications by electronic means.

After consultation, 13 supported the change, 2 were against and 10 had not replied. It was noted that ICT were arranging to install equipment at 3 parish or town councils per month and, as a result, this Council would be able to stop sending hard copies to the following authorities from March:-

- Fordingbridge
- Hythe and Dibden
- Ringwood
- Totton and Eling

Regular reports will be received until the roll-out of the scheme has been completed.

Small parishes that did not want to switch to electronic reviews will still be able to borrow paper copies of planning applications from this Council's offices.

2.6 Policy for the Issue, Cancellation and Administration of Penalty Charge Notices

The Panel has recently advised the Portfolio Holder on the proposed guidance policies relating to the issue and cancellation of Penalty Charge Notices for on street and off street car parking, prior to their formal publication.

3. BUDGET ISSUES

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio has been faced with some significant financial issues which, for various reasons, depended on external influences and would have a considerable effect on the budget, depending on their outcome. The issues were:

- Land Charges Income
- Concessionary Travel
- Planning Delivery Grant

The Panel has received regular updates and continues to monitor events closely.

4. JOINT MEETINGS

The first few months of the Panel's existence were marked by 3 joint meetings, all on quite weighty issues:

4.1 Joint Meeting with Employment Health and Wellbeing Review Panel to consider PUSH Governance Arrangements (1 August 2008)

Pursuant to Minute 21 of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 July 2007, the Panels considered the proposed new governance arrangements for the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), specifically the advantages and disadvantages of the proposals. The meeting recommended the proposed arrangements and expressed their support for cross-party working in connection with PUSH.

4.2 Joint Meeting with Planning Development Control Committee (8 August 2007)

This meeting considered:

- (a) A document entitled Planning for a Sustainable Future - Planning White Paper - May 2007- Response to Consultation

This was an important White Paper with potentially significant impacts on our planning system. There is a need to make changes to ensure that future challenges can be effectively addressed and to remedy some unnecessary complexities introduced by recent legislative changes.

Members reviewed in detail the brief description of the proposals and a proposed response to the 40 consultation questions was agreed by the meeting and recommended to the Portfolio Holder for onward transmission to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

- (b) Department of Communities and Local Government – Responses to Consultation Papers

The Committee considered a detailed report and advised the Portfolio Holder on a suggested response to the following issues:

- Permitted Development Rights for Householder Micro Generation Proposals
- Permitted Development Rights for Householders
- Planning Performance Agreements
- Improving the Appeal Process in the Planning System
- Planning Fees in England: Proposals for Change

4.3 Joint Meeting with Planning Development Control Committee (19 September 2008) - Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Preferred Options

The meeting considered the Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Preferred Options document. This was a very important document which worked towards the planning strategy over the next 20 years. Various comments were passed to Cabinet, including concerns regarding housing provision requirements in the South East Plan, and Green Belt issues.

5. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Panel assessed achievements against Key Targets for 2007/08 and considered Key Targets for 2008/09.

No specific items of concern were raised when reviewing performance. The Panel has asked for updates to be submitted to the Panel on progress against the targets at interim stages throughout the year.

The Panel recommended the use of an additional target to increase the number of electronic speed limit warning and reminder signs (SLRS & SIDS) deployed in 2008/09, subject to availability of funds.

6. OTHER ITEMS CONSIDERED

- Proposed Supplementary Planning Document (Parking) – Public Response to consultation
- Sustainable Construction / Development
- Street Lighting Redesignation
- Corporate Consultations.

7. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

2007/08 was a year where Planning and Transportation issues dominated the Council Tax debate. Of greatest concern are the changes to the concessionary travel for the over 60's where the underfunding by the Government has led the NFDC to make a provision of £300,000 to cover this compared to the prior year. As there remain a number of significant unknowns the Panel has decided to scrutinise this throughout the following year.

A major activity throughout the last year was the creation of the Preferred Options as part of the task to produce the new Local Development Framework, which will go through further alterations in 2008 before going to Examination in Public in 2009.

The Panel has also been looking forward and is concerned about the demands being made by increasing traffic on our townships. To address this, the Panel has requested that studies be carried out using Lymington for the pilot, to define a future strategy to address car parking, traffic management and the contribution that public transport can make.

Cllr P Vickers

Chairman, Planning and Transportation Review Panel