

PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
21 JANUARY 1999

Present: Councillors Mrs Ballin (Chairman), Adams, Bayle, Mrs Doyle, Finnie, Grayson, Harrison, Jones, Piasecki, Mrs Pile, Ryan, Sargeant, Simonds, Veakins, Wade and Worrall

Also Present: Councillors Bettison, Blatchford, McCormack and North

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Flood

396. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute Member in accordance with Standing Order No. 38:

Councillor Harrison for Councillor Flood

397. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 October 1998 and the special meeting held on 19 November 1999 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

398. Urgent Items of Business under Standing Order No. 7

There were no urgent items of business under Standing Order No. 7.

399. Minutes of Sub Committees

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Highways Sub Committee held on 7 January 1999, and the minutes of the Planning Control Sub Committee held on 24 September, 22 October, 19 November and 16 and 17 December 1998 as set out in Appendices A to F hereto, be noted and received.

The following points were also noted arising on these minutes:

- That Councillor Veakins had also been present at the meeting of the Highways Sub-Committee held on 7 January 1999.
- That arising on resolution 2(d) of minute 37 of the Highways Sub-Committee on 7 January 1999, only those residents of Hanworth who had previously made known their objections and those who, in the opinion of the Director of Planning & Transportation, were likely to be affected by any alteration to the existing arrangements at the Ringmead/A3095 Crowthorne Road junction would be consulted.

400. **Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)**

The Committee received a copy of the Director of Planning & Transportation's Quarterly Operations Report.

The Director briefly drew the Committee's attention to the key points emerging from the report, in particular, the new and current issues. He answered a number of questions arising from the report. One of the points made was the fact that the impact of work arising from the Local Plan inquiry was being monitored. In relation to this, the Committee indicated its support for the staff whose efforts were recognised.

401. **Concessionary Fares Scheme – Proposed Amendments (Item 2)**

The Committee considered a report on proposals to develop the Council's Concessionary Fares Scheme in the light of monitoring and assessment by officers since the introduction of changes approved at the meeting on 25 June 1998.

The Committee noted that the intention was to provide an affordable way of increasing access to a travel pass for a larger number of elderly people.

Whilst the Committee welcomed the proposal, there was a view that the cost of the pass should be limited to £20.80 rather than the £40 proposed in the report. It was stressed, however, that the level of the proposed fee had been set after careful consideration with a view to ensuring that the pass was available to those who most needed it, whilst not exposing the Council to escalating costs. It was considered that the proposals achieved this by making provision for the pass to be available at half price for the most needy. An amendment seeking to set the fee at the lower level for all was defeated. It was, however, noted that the tickets would be available on a half-yearly basis.

Having discussed the basis on which the fee level and discount arrangements had been determined, the original proposal was approved subject to a number of minor amendments, including a recognition of the need to maintain a dialogue with pensioners' representatives.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to consideration of the 1999/2000 Revenue Budget by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 16 February 1999, the Concessionary Fares Scheme be amended with effect from 1 April 1999 as follows:

- 1 that an unlimited bus travel pass within Berkshire be available to disabled persons and all persons aged 65 years and over [and to individuals aged between 60 and 65 who held bus travel passes at 25 June 1998 and continue to hold them at all subsequent renewal dates];
- 2 that the cost be set at £40 per person per annum, with a 50% reduction for applicants in receipt of housing/council tax benefit or income support and for disabled persons;
- 3 that no increase be made in the cost of half fare bus travel passes;
- 4 that the concessions in respect of Senior Citizens' Rail Cards and Disabled Persons' Rail Cards remain unaltered; and,

- 5 that the Council continue to engage with representatives of the pensioners' groups as a basis for consultation on any future improvements to the Concessionary Fares Scheme.

402. **Revenue Budget 1999/2000 (Item 3)**

The Committee considered a report on its revenue budget for 1999/2000 which had been prepared within the framework set by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 6 January 1999.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the draft base budget for 1999/2000 as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the report be approved;
- 2 That the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested, in considering the Council's budget for 1999/2000:
 - i. To approve the changes to the Base budget as identified in the latest Commitment Budget as shown in Annexe A;
 - ii. To note the potential for cash limiting running expense budgets set out in Annexe B;
 - iii. To consider the potential service developments, pressures and economies identified in Annexes C and D respectively; and,
 - iv. To increase fees and charges from 1 April 1999 as shown in Annexe E1

403. **Community Transport Strategy (Item 4)**

The Committee considered a report on the Borough Council's draft Community Transport Strategy which had been the subject of public consultation in accordance with the Committee's decision on 1 October 1998.

The report summarised comments received and suggested minor alterations to be made to the draft strategy in response to them, with a view to approving the revised document.

The Committee was advised that the Strategy would inform the work which the Council would be carrying out in relation to Bracknell town centre, the Local Transport Plan and bids for grant aid. In addition, it highlighted the need for proper dissemination of information on the subject.

The Director of Planning & Transportation answered a number of questions. Amongst the points emerging were:

- That discussions were already taking place with the bus operators regarding the introduction of low-level buses.

- That discussions had and would continue to be held with Railtrack regarding access improvements to the Reading-bound platform at Bracknell station and others in the borough where existing facilities restricted access to those with disabilities.
- That the town centre development might provide opportunities for bringing about access improvements through partnership working.
- That consideration would be given as to how interested Members might be formally involved in the meetings relating to community transport issues which the officers would be continuing to have with interested parties.

It was also recognised that there was a need for sensitivity in dealing with volunteers as any attempt to enforce an integrated system could be counter-productive.

RESOLVED: That the amended Community Transport Strategy, set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and adopted.

404. **SERPLAN - A Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East (Item 5)**

The Committee considered a report on a suggested response to SERPLAN's final draft of its Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East, which was to form its Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG). The report focused on changes made to the strategy relating to the points raised previously by the Council and any other matters which were considered to have implications for Bracknell Forest.

The Director of Planning & Transportation answered a number of questions. Amongst the points made were:

- That the "Plan, Monitor and Manage" approach was at the heart of the Strategy.
- That employment was a key issue which needed to be monitored to ensure that the right balance was maintained.
- That the issue of a new town or settlement was one which needed to be considered sooner rather than later, whether or not either was ultimately determined to be practical.

With regard to population, the Committee was advised that current estimates for the Borough showed a continuing growth, but the structure of the population could alter in time.

Having discussed the issues raised by the Strategy, it was agreed to approve the suggested comments subject to a review of the wording of the section relating to the overall reduction in the number of houses to be provided in Berkshire, and its impact on Bracknell Forest.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the Panel Secretary be informed, in relation to SERPLAN's final draft of its Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East, of the comments set out in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the report, subject to the Director

amending the wording of paragraph 4.4 to reflect the discussion on housing numbers; and,

- 2 That the Director of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, be authorised to submit any further representations on behalf of the Borough Council arising from the document which are related to the comments previously raised by the Borough Council or arise out of consideration by the Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

405. Charges for Building Control Applications (Item 6)

The Committee considered a report on the latest position with regard to charges for building control applications. An additional paper was circulated to the Committee setting out revised recommendations in the light of the legislation and guidance circulars received from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Local Government Association.

The Committee agreed to adopt the model scheme of charges issued by the Local Government Association.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the level of Building Regulation Fees charged by the Borough Council be based on those contained in the Local Government Association's Model Scheme dated 7 January 1999; and,
- 2 That, in due course, a progress report be brought to the Committee to inform Members on the effects of the Borough Council setting its own building regulation charges.

406. Parking Overview (Item 7)

The Committee considered a report on current parking issues in the Borough arising, in particular, as a result of recent guidance on transport issues, and which suggested how this guidance might influence future work on parking policies within the Borough.

The matter was also to be considered at the Public and Environmental Services Committee on 26 January 1999.

In response to a question regarding the involvement of other interested committees, the Director of Planning & Transportation indicated that he believed the composition of the Focus Group was appropriate, adding that it would be consulting widely to take account of the interests of other committees.

RESOLVED that a Focus Group consisting of five members (3:2) and appropriate Officers be established jointly with the Public and Environmental Services Committee to examine the parking issues within the Borough and to steer the development of a new parking strategy.

407. **Government Office of the South East - Parking Standards in the South East (Item 8)**

The Committee considered a report advising it that the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) had published a report prepared on its and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions behalf concerning Parking Standards in the South East outside London. GOSE had advised that the findings and conclusions of the work were to inform the revision of the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9). Whilst there was to be no formal consultation relating to the document, GOSE had indicated that it would welcome comments on the report and the issues it contained.

The Committee noted that the proposals would have a significant impact if accepted. It was acknowledged that, to some extent, the proposals had evolved from the Rio Summit on the environment. It was accepted that environmental awareness was rising and the issue was therefore becoming increasingly important.

It was also recognised that the issue was important for the villages in the Borough as well as Bracknell town centre.

The Committee accepted the comments suggested in the report, subject to the wording of paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 being amended to recognise not only disabled people, but also other groups likely to be affected by parking restrictions.

RESOLVED that, in relation to the report on Parking Standards in the South East, the Government Office of the South East be advised of the comments set out in paragraphs 4.5-4.9 of the report.

408. **Local Transport Plans (Item 9)**

The Committee considered a report advising it of the introduction of Local Transport Plans, which were to replace the Transport Policies and Programme as the main means of securing government capital funding allowances for transportation measures.

Given the extent of detailed work which would be necessary to prepare the Local Transport Plan, the Committee agreed to establish a Focus Group to undertake the work and make recommendations in due course.

RESOLVED

- 1 That a Focus Group consisting of five members (3:2) and appropriate Officers be established to receive and consider reports from officers in connection with the preparation of the Local Transport Plan; and,
- 2 That the Director of Planning and Transportation be authorised, subject to prior consultation with the Focus Group, to take all measures required to prepare a draft Local Transport Plan and to carry out consultation thereon.

409. **Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) - Settlement for 1999/2000 (Item 10)**

The Committee considered a report advising it of the of the settlement of the Transport Policies and Programme for 1999/2000, the bid for which had been approved for submission to the Government Office for the South East at its meeting on 25 June 1998.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the TPP settlement for 1999/2000 be noted; and,
- 2 That further consideration be given to the settlement when deciding the budget allocations for 1999/2000.

410. **Items for Information**

The following items were submitted for information:

- DETR Consultation Paper – Modernising Planning: Improving Telecommunications Development Control (Item 11)
- Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Inquiry – Progress Report (Item 12)
- Point Royal, Easthampstead (Item 13)
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council Design Conference (Item 14)
- Joint Strategic Planning Committee Items (Item 15)

Arising on item 12, the Committee noted that, although the inquiry inspector had been willing to continue beyond 5 pm on a number of days, it had not been possible to go on beyond 6.30 pm as the Council Chamber had been required for other meetings thereafter.

Arising on item 14, the Committee was advised that the means by which the views of the Urban Design Officer are reported would be reviewed.

The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.
and concluded at 9.55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN