

COUNCIL MEETING - 22 JULY 2003

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL **COUNCILLOR BISHOP - PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

1. Disabled Parking Charges

The Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel, at its meeting on 10 June 2003 considered parking charges for Blue Badge holders. The Panel recommended that the current charges be abolished for Blue Badge holders.

The estimated annual income from charges paid by badge holders is £70,000 per annum. The impact on the 2003/04 budget, due to the timing of this change, was likely to be in the order of £50,000. This can be funded by virement in the current year with £30 coming from HMSO Licensing and £20,000 from Environmental Schemes. The Executive agree with the recommendation of the Review Panel.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that £50,000 be vired for the funding of the removal of charges on disabled car parking.

2. Planning Staff

The Strategic Planning Transportation and Economic Development Review Panel at its meeting on 10 June 2003 considered a report on Performance and Staffing in Development Control. The report outlined the use of the Planning Delivery Grant in 2003/04 and recommended the appointment of one full time and one part time member of staff within the Planning Unit.

As the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, I have agreed the Panel's recommendations and now seek approval of the necessary budget changes.

The Government have issued additional funds to all Planning Authorities in 2003/04 under the heading of Planning Delivery Grant. This money has been issued to Authorities based on planning performance with this Council receiving £75,000. Similar grants might be available in future years but this cannot be guaranteed or budgeted for with any certainty. The grant should be targeted to delivering improved services.

The report submitted to the Panel outlined a request for additional staffing within the Planning Unit which will cost £32,179. This is ongoing expenditure and cannot be funded from the Planning Delivery Grant. The Planning income levels have increased steadily over the last few years. It is proposed to fund the cost of employing additional permanent staff within the Planning Unit by virement. This can be done by increasing the base budget for Planning fee income by £32,180 and increasing the base budget for

Planning staff by the same amount. Should the Planning fee income fall short of the new increased budget, the staffing levels will be revisited.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:-

- (1) the virement of £32,180 for the funding of additional staff within the Planning Unit be agreed;
- (2) the allocation of the Planning Delivery Grant within the 2003/04 budget be agreed.

Councillor C Bishop

COUNCIL MEETING 22 JULY 2003

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR BISHOP – PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

Last month, I attended a meeting, organised by the South West Regional Assembly, to discuss the implications of the proposed changes to Strategic Planning for the area and how the arrangements could be made to work most effectively.

The Government now expects commencement of Parts 1 and 2 of the Bill to be in June/July 2004.

We are fortunate that the stage has been reached with the Taunton Local Plan which will allow the Plan to be adopted under current procedures, and it is expected that the Inspector will present his report in October 2003.

Members' Planning Code of Good Practice

The Code of Good Practice has been prepared in response to the Local Government Association's Note on the preparation of Local Codes of Good Practice on Planning matters in the light of the introduction of the new ethical framework and in consultation with the District Audit Service, Local Government Ombudsman and the Standards Board for England.

The aim of the code is to ensure that in the planning process there are no grounds for suggesting that a decision has been biased, partial or not well founded in any way.

The draft code will be considered by the Standards Board in July before it is released to members.

SWARMMS – Update

The Secretary of State has responded to the London to South West and Wales Multi-modal (SWARMMS) and agreed recommendations. There is a strong presumption against additional road capacity in areas of environmental sensitivity.

The Highways Agency (HA) have appointed consultants P B Kennedy and Donkin to undertake further work to assess the relative impacts of possible improvements to the A358 and the A303 west of Ilminster. A number of value management exercises have been carried out on the A358 dualling, Somerset County Council have asked W.S, Atkins to shadow the HA consultants work on the A358. Dualling of the A358 is largely feasible on line, except for the section at Henlade, where a new dual carriageway is required. One of the most complex issues is the design of the link to and from the A358 onto the M5 in the Exeter direction.

It is anticipated that the HA will report on the options to the Minister in September 2003 and the Regional Planning Body will also consider it.

Employment Land Monitoring Report

At its meeting on 10 June the Strategic Planning and Economic Development Review Panel considered a report on the Council's Land Monitoring Report 2003. The report provides data on a range of indicators, including the estimated employment area in the Borough, the level of employment land 'take up', the supply of vacant employment land, employment density, and the quality of employment areas. This is required as

part of the Council's monitoring activities relating to the development and planning of the area. The report shows that we are on course to meet the employment land requirement of 115 hectares set down in the Structure Plan, and that in the year ended on 31 March 2003, 3.2 hectares of land were developed for employment uses whilst planning permission was granted for 5.6 hectares. Also at 31 March there was a total 27.8 hectares of undeveloped employment land available for a range of development..

Tone Mill, Wellington

We are continuing to work with Regeneration Through Heritage (part of the Prince's Foundation) English Heritage and other partners to promote and investigate the possibility of a community-based regeneration project for this important heritage site. A Planning Day was organised at Tone Dale House on 2nd June, at which a range of local individuals and organisations with a potential interest, including councillors, came together to hear more about the idea and contribute their own views. This was highly successful, and it is clear that there is considerable support for this scheme that could help secure the future of Fox Brothers Ltd, provide a visitor attraction, and achieve the restoration and maintenance of important Listed Buildings and equipment. The next stage will be to seek financial assistance for a Feasibility Study of the proposal..

Land at Odeon Cinema, Taunton

Extension to existing 5 screen multiplex cinema to provide 8 screens.

On 18 and 19 March 2003 I attended an inquiry and gave evidence in support of the Planning Committee's decision to grant permission for the development.

The application was called in for decision by the Secretary of State by a direction made under section 77 of the 1990 Act on 18 September, 2002.

The decision has now been received and I am pleased to report, that after considering all the issues the Secretary of State accepted the Inspectors recommendation and concluded that the proposal was in line with the relevant approved development plan policies or consistent with policies in PPG6 and he granted planning permission for the extension.

It is gratifying to Members of the Planning Committee that their decision has been confirmed.

CLIFF BISHOP