

**SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Report of the Director of Environment

**PLANNING OBLIGATIONS**

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To consider whether the County Council's arrangements and procedures for securing public benefits from development should be the subject of scrutiny by the Select Committee.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The County Council has a range of interests across all of its services that it may need to consider when pursuing planning obligations from development. The potential areas include highway matters, libraries/community information centres, fire and rescue facilities, education and social service facilities. They may also include opportunities for environmental enhancement or conservation.
- 2.2 To provide a co-ordinated response to development proposals that represents all of the County Council's interests a corporate group, called the Planning Obligations Steering Group and chaired by the County Property Officer, oversees this activity. This Group works to agreed Terms of Reference and was the subject of a report to the Standards Panel in 1998.
- 2.3 The Environment Department's significant interest is in relation to highway and transportation matters and this is managed by the Head of Transport Planning and Policy, who undertakes regular monitoring and management of the funds secured for this purpose. This process was the subject of a report by Internal Audit in 1997.
- 2.4 Most development decisions rest with the district councils and as such the County Council cannot always ensure that its recommendations with regard to planning obligations are always acted on. In 1999, following the report to the Standards Panel, the County Council tried to establish how far its recommendations were adopted or on what basis they were varied but had little response. The value of benefits secured by planning obligations is recorded by category (highway benefits, other benefits from district council decisions and benefits accruing from the County Council's decisions as waste and mineral planning authority).

### **3. Financial Summary**

Planning obligations play an increasingly important part of funding for public services but developers will only enter into negotiations when local authority requirements are fully justified. There are currently contributions totalling £4.4m being held relating to specific highways and transportation matters, with further contributions agreed but which have not yet been triggered.

### **4. Conclusion**

Members are asked to decide whether the procedures and arrangements for securing public benefit from development should be the subject of scrutiny by this Select Committee or whether they should more appropriately be scrutinised in terms of their wider impact upon all services via consideration by the Resources, Prosperity Partnership and Consultation Select Committee.