

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**TUESDAY, 10 JULY 2001 AT 2.15 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

**3**

**SELECT COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2001/02**

Report of the County Secretary

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To consider the issues put forward by the group spokesmen for possible scrutiny and to determine a work programme for scrutiny in 2001/02, incorporating outstanding scrutiny items.

**2. Items for Consideration**

2.1 Proposals for scrutiny items will be put forward at the meeting of the Environment Select Committee.

2.2 To incorporate into the work programme the following outstanding scrutiny items from 2000/01:-

- Planning Enforcement
- St Albans Road Green Route, Watford
- Consideration of whether withdrawal of Commercial Bus Services is an appropriate subject for scrutiny

**3. Conclusions**

The Select Committee should discuss whether or not they wish to scrutinise any proposed items. If they choose to do so, this may be done by, for example:

- questioning officers/executive members at the meeting
- requesting a further report
- referring the matter to a panel/topic group

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The County Council on 16 May adopted a new constitution with effect from 1 August 2000 (subsequently amended by the Council at its meetings on 28 November 2000 and 3 April 2001). Within that constitution it was agreed that each Select Committee should scrutinise and make recommendations to the Council, Cabinet or a Chief Officer on particular areas of policy or service delivery which they have chosen to investigate, providing that they do not duplicate the work of a Best Value Review; or investigate a matter which it has considered within the preceding six months, unless requested to do so by the Cabinet or Council.
- 1.2 The items detailed below were agreed for scrutiny by Environment Select Committee, however, scrutiny work relating to them has not been completed.

## **2.0 Outstanding Scrutiny Items**

- 2.1 The Select Committee are requested to consider the incorporation of the following scrutiny items into the Select Committee's scrutiny work programme:-

### **2.2 St Albans Road Green Route, Watford**

Following a request from B A York, the Environment Select Committee agreed at the meeting held on 17 October 2000 that this item be the subject of scrutiny. He informed members the St Albans Green Route had emerged as part of County Council policy to encourage the use of buses and trains, reduce the number of cars on the route and transfer a significant number of car journeys from St Albans Road to the M1 link.

- 2.2.1 The Environment Select Committee agreed that the Transport Panel should be asked to objectively examine the following aspects and report back to the Select Committee:-

- its success or otherwise in terms of bus times;
- whether the scheme met its original objectives, including its effect on numbers of passengers, pollution, modal shifts;
- the contribution made to wider public/social benefits;
- the process of consultation and impact of satisfying local objectives/concerns;
- lessons learned.

- 2.2.2 It was also suggested that the issue of green routes across the whole county should be looked at to consider their future role as a component of the County Council's transport strategy.

- 2.2.3 This issue is still undergoing investigation through the Transport Panel.

### **2.3 Withdrawal of Commercial Bus Services**

On the basis of B A York's justification, the Environment Select Committee held on 23 January 2001 agreed that a further report should be submitted to a future meeting of

the Select Committee to enable consideration of whether this item is appropriate for scrutiny:

"It is not easy for members to keep abreast of the withdrawal of commercial bus services, nor with the extent to which they are 'replaced' by contracted services. What is clear, however, is public concern with what are perceived to be deteriorating levels of service for them - witness complaints and requests to/via members, letters to MPs and reports in, and letters to, Hertfordshire newspapers. Withdrawal of services has led to difficult consequences for not only many passengers but also the County Council in funding 75% of the cost of each contracted service and the district councils which fund 25%."

2.3.1 The Select Committee agreed that the Director of Environment arrange a bus summit involving service providers in order to explore the factors influencing the provision of commercial bus services in Hertfordshire as a first step towards determining the scope for any future scrutiny. The summit should address the following areas:-

- withdrawal of service;
- changes to routes;
- connectivity;
- connections to hospitals;
- reliability and problems caused by congestion.

2.3.2 A bus summit has already been held and a second has been arranged for 11 July 2001. The outcomes of the summits will be reported to a future meeting of the Environment Select Committee.

## 2.4 Planning Enforcement

M Moore put forward the following justification for scrutiny of planning enforcement at the Environment Select Committee held on 23 January 2001:-

"The committee are asked to scrutinise the County Council's current arrangements and procedures for planning enforcement in the county to see if they are working well or are inadequate. If they are used can they be implemented more quickly and made more effective?"

It is envisaged that the emphasis of the work of the scrutiny committee would be on minerals and waste planning matters where the County Council is the planning authority. The committee should, amongst other things, examine the staffing and financial resources available for enforcement activity. How does Hertfordshire compare to other authorities? When things go wrong, how effective is the County Council in containing the problems that arise and remedying the situation? What lessons can be learned from previous and on-going high profile cases like Lye Lane Golf Course at Bricket Wood and Water Hall for internal HCC procedures or recommendations for improved court procedures and/or national legislation?

The outcome of the investigation would be a series of recommendations for improving HCC procedures and performance and a list of things we would like to see the government implement or change to assist HCC in its public role."

- 2.4.1 The Environment Select Committee agreed that the suggestions put forward by M Moore should form the basis of the terms of reference for scrutiny and that the Development Control Committee be asked to comment on the officer review of enforcement following its completion in March 2001, in order to inform the Select Committee's scrutiny of this subject.
- 2.4.2 A report on this matter incorporating the comments of the Development Control Committee will be presented to this meeting of the Environment Select Committee.

### **3.0 Conclusions**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the proposals put forward by the group spokesmen for scrutiny and incorporate into the scrutiny work programme the outstanding scrutiny items detailed above.

#### *Background papers used by the author in compiling this report*

Constitution of the County Council adopted 16 May 2000 as amended on 28 November 2000 and 3 April 2001

Environment Select Committee 17 October 2000, agenda and minutes

Environment Select Committee 23 January 2001, agenda and minutes