

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 1999**

NOTE: A full copy of the reports mentioned below have been sent to all members of the Community Services Committee and other members who have requested it. Any queries on this report to: Joan Blake, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Tel: 01992 555560)

1 GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON TOBACCO "SMOKING KILLS"

The Committee have taken an interest in this subject following their annual deliberations under the Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act, 1991, which requires the County Council to consider a programme of action to deter under-age sales of tobacco. In March 1997 they resolved to urge the government to earmark the tax revenue from illegal sales to fund enforcement, promote health education and support for smokers, and eradicate tobacco advertising. A letter conveying these views was sent to Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, and his response outlined the government's determination to control tobacco consumption, ban advertising and communicate a strategy to reduce smoking in a White Paper. It did not mention funding for enforcement.

A White Paper was subsequently published, detailing the government's programme of action to protect children from the effects of tobacco and to assist adults to give up smoking.

The part of the White Paper which directly involves the County Council, as the enforcement agency, is the section on Young People and Advertising. The White Paper details a range of steps to help protect young people by making it less likely they will begin to smoke, ie:--

- minimal tobacco advertising in shops
- tough enforcement on under-age sales
- proof of age cards
- strong rules on siting of cigarette vending machines.

Enforcement on under-age sales is mentioned in some detail, and the the White Paper states that if local authorities carry out their obligations then much better compliance can be expected. Local authorities, whilst

adopting a constructive approach in helping retailers meet their responsibilities, are also expected to prosecute persistent offenders.

The White Paper does not specifically seek comment, but the Committee have agreed a response to be sent to the Department of Health, which reiterates their view that tax revenue from illegal sales should be used to fund enforcement and promote health education.

The Health Authorities, the Health Task Group and the Education Department have been made aware that the County Council will be responding to the White Paper in case they wish to comment also.

2 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT 1998/99 – FOR PERIOD FROM 1 APRIL TO 30 NOVEMBER 1998

Each of the Council's Committees receive regular budget monitoring reports throughout the year, which highlight significant underspends or overspends compared to the budget, and discuss proposals for managing the variations that arise.

The budget monitor reported to the Community Services Committee for the period to the end of November indicated the following projected position:-

	Latest Approved Budget £'000	Projected Spend at Year End £'000	Projected (Under) / Overspend £'000	Carry Forwards Requested £'000
Fire & Rescue	21,331	21,346	15	170
Fire Pensions	3,327	3,327		
Community Information	15,273	15,404	131	
Youth	5,016	5,164	148	
Registration	606	576	(30)	30
Coroners	559	584	25	
Other*	137	118	(19)	25
TOTAL	46,249	46,519	270	225

* *Other services include Emergency Planning, Gypsy Service and the Rent Officer Service.*

In setting the 1998/99 council budget, provision was made for 2.7 % pay increases for all groups of staff. The November 1998 firefighters' pay award, which was settled at 5.6%, will produce additional costs for the service of £185,000 in 1998/99. As has been the practice in previous years in relation to nationally agreed pay awards, the Committee requested

that Policy Committee fund this extra cost from reserves. (Note: this course of action was subsequently approved by Policy Committee at their meeting on 27 January.)

Community Information Directorate reported a projected shortfall in income of £260,000, from new and increased library charges and commercial activities and sponsorship. The service has identified offsetting savings of £129,000 in various budgets including information technology and the materials fund.

The youth service projected an overspend of £179,000 relating to the costs of staff restructuring during the year, and anticipated delay in achieving all of the savings on the running costs of buildings that were originally planned. The service has, so far, identified savings of £31,000 to offset these costs.

Services are continuing to seek further savings to further reduce the projected overspends during the remainder of the financial year.

The position on the Committee's 1998/99 capital budget indicated that, compared to an approved budget of £2.23m, spending during the year is estimated to be £1.55m because some of the programmed schemes will not be completed until the next financial year. The two main reasons for this projected slippage are that the scheme to build a new retained fire station at London Colney is unlikely to get underway during the current financial year, and also the work to determine a suitable interim strategy leading to replacement of the Fire & Rescue Service's radio scheme has not progressed as quickly as anticipated. This is due to delays in project development at the Home Office.

P V Goggins
Chairman
County Hall
Hertford
14 January 1999