

HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Association meeting held at Winchester Guildhall on 30 March 2007 at 10.00 am.

Basingstoke and Deane	Councillor J Leek G Holdcroft (Chief Executive)
East Hampshire	Councillor E Cartwright M Reed
Eastleigh	B Topham (Chief Executive)
Fareham	Councillor A Mandry A Davies (Chief Executive)
Gosport	Councillor P Langdon D Jago K Carron (Head of Housing Strategic Services)
Hampshire	Councillor K Thornber Councillor M Woodhall P Robertson (Chief Executive) I Parker (Head of Estates Management)
Hart	Councillor D Neighbour G Bonner (Chief Executive)
Havant	Councillor D Gillett G Andrews (Chief Executive)
Isle of Wight	Councillor J Wood
New Forest	Councillor M Holding Councillor M Kendal (Vice-Chairman) D Yates (Chief Executive)
Portsmouth	Councillor L Mason D Williams (Chief Executive)
Rushmoor	Councillor R Dibbs Councillor P Moyle (Chairman)
Southampton	Councillor D Beckett B Roynon (Chief Executive)
Test Valley	R Tetstall (Chief Executive)
Winchester	Councillor G Beckett Councillor C Sutton S Eden (Chief Executive)

Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC)	Councillor D Bidwell J Harrap
Eastleigh Community Services	K Dufton (Chief Executive)
Hampshire Fire and Rescue	Councillor M Cartwright
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association	N Goulder (Director) D Allen (PA to Director)
New Forest National Park Authority	T Johnson

Also in attendance:

Government Office for the South East	C Evans (Acting Director, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Government Office for the South East)
Local Government Association	Councillor M Robinson
Communities and Local Government	L Bell (Director of Local Government Finance)
National Association of Local Councils	J Griggs
Audit Commission	L Krywald

11.07 WELCOME

The Mayor of Winchester, Councillor Sue Nelmes, welcomed all those present to the meeting.

12.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K House and A Winstanley (Eastleigh); Councillor S Woodward (Fareham); Councillor S Cully (Gosport); Councillors A Collett and A Rice (Hampshire); J Bonney (Hampshire Fire and Rescue); Steven Lugg (HAPTC); Councillor T Briggs (Havant); Councillor A Vinson (Southampton); L Cornish (New Forest National Park Authority); Councillors Tuson and Sutton, J Duckworth (Isle of Wight); B Blezzard (IoWAPTC); Councillor J Patey (Portsmouth); Councillors I Carr and T Jackson (Test Valley).

13.07. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

14.07 **DEVELOPMENTS IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT/LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND THE LYONS REPORT**

The Chairman introduced Lindsay Bell, Director of Local Government Finance at Communities and Local Government.

Ms Bell's presentation focussed on:

- changing the way the Department works
- the White Paper
- Central local relationship
- relationship with partners
- Local Area Agreements (LAAs)
- relations with citizens and communities
- the Lyons report
- the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007

She also answered the following concerns from those present including:

- LAAs and the lack of freedom or flexibility;
- severe strains to local government regarding year-on-year 3% "efficiency" savings;
- local authorities not being able to hold "all out" elections until 2011;
- possible conflict with LSPs and a disconnect with the elected council. Confusion as to whether LSPs or local authorities were setting priorities;
- disappointment that the Government response to the Lyons review did not include an early implementation of the Council Tax recommendations;
- disappointment with the reality of LAAs creating a lot of work and few results;
- the evidence that sufficient funding for adult social care would help the NHS. This area was underfunded at present;
- the perception that Whitehall tended to address local authorities as if they all had Unitary status rather than two tier;
- possible confusion by the electorate over the difference between communities, neighbourhoods and Parish Councils;
- disappointment that Parish Councils were not included in the consultation process;
- the feeling that Parish Councils were not perceived by Whitehall to be part of local government;
- issues surrounding timetabling and Treasury funding streams;

- Hampshire local authorities being hit hard by grant equalisation and the redistribution of money to authorities in the Midlands and the North and whether any changes were expected as a result of CSR07.

It was felt by some that the Government and Lyons Review were offering some positive outcomes for local government. Hampshire was pleased that Lyons recommended retaining the Council Tax system.

Hampshire reported that it was committed to the two-tier system in the county. Hampshire was one of the leading counties for quality parish councils and had developed Hampshire Action Teams with local authorities.

Lindsay Bell dealt with the various questions and concerns, in some cases offering to report back. She said that the Government saw local authorities as “place shapers” working in close partnership with others whilst the democratic council was centre-stage. She drew attention to the future performance assessment which would assess the degree and success of partnership working. She commented that local authorities should work through the Local Government Association with Government to create their own guidance rather than expect Government to write guidance. On the area cost adjustment she said that the Settlement Working Group and Minister would be revisiting the issue. She denied that the consultation prior to the publication of the White Paper was too short and drew attention to the long period of consultation.

The Chairman thanked Lindsay Bell for attending the meeting and providing a valuable dialogue with central government.

15.07 NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Chairman introduced Justin Griggs from the National Association of Local Councils who had been invited on the initiative of the HAPTC.

Mr Griggs’ presentation focussed on:

- a background to the work of parish councils;
- reflections and observations on the role of parish councils and neighbourhood development;
- the opportunity for all tiers of local authorities to work together.

Justin Griggs and Lindsay Bell answered questions and concerns from those present including:

- concerns that County and Unitary authorities had the power to abolish parish councils;
- concerns that parish councils did not always have the capacity and resources to deliver;

- concerns about the quality of on-line plans for planning applications;
- concerns around declarations of interest by parish councillors - it was noted that the Code of Conduct was under review;
- the feeling that parish councils needed more powers. There was an opportunity to look at the function of parish councils. The Isle of Wight drew attention to its programme of devolution and secondment;
- the need for parishes to “cluster” in order to accept devolved powers;
- the importance of parish plans;
- concerns over County Councils not District Councils creating parish councils.

Several authorities pointed out how fundamental parish councils were to a thriving local democracy, although Portsmouth City Council argued that neighbourhood development could be better organised without another layer of local democracy.

The Chairman thanked Justin Griggs for his presentation and for stimulating this important debate.

16.07 **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS (DFGs)**

The Director introduced his report on this subject which summarised the latest Government consultation and reported on the response from this Association’s Housing Advisory Group. The Director also reported on a meeting he had attended at the Local Government Association on 28 March and said that the financial pressures as a result of DFGs would probably increase.

East Hampshire raised concerns about registered social landlords being required to fund adaptations to their own properties. The council also expressed concern over DFG grant money no longer being ring fenced. It was felt that the money might be used to fund other projects.

RESOLVED

That the amendments to the response suggested by East Hampshire be reported to the Housing Advisory Group.

17.07 **REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY - PROVISION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

The Chairman introduced Ian Parker who summarised his report on this topic. He also acknowledged the work undertaken by the Hampshire Joint Authority Gypsy and Traveller Panel.

The report provided an update of the actions taken by the Gypsy and Traveller Panel. It also identified the accommodation assessment and town planning requirements of recent legislation and government guidance relating to provision of facilities for gypsies and travellers. The report proposed a method to deliver recommendations for levels of gypsy and traveller accommodation in Hampshire to the Regional Assembly in connection with the Regional Spatial Strategy. It proposed that members of HIOW continue to work through the Gypsy and Traveller Panel to co-ordinate the implementation of facilities allocated in the Regional Spatial Strategy and to be included in emerging development plan documents being produced by all the local planning authorities in Hampshire.

Kim Carron updated those present on various issues including the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Planning Officers' Group view that local panels should be strengthened and a meeting she had with the consultants concerning the accommodation needs assessment. She reported that Hampshire was 95 pitches short and that there was a danger that the Regional Assembly would impose pitch numbers on Hampshire.

Councillor Cecily Sutton (Chair of the Hampshire Joint Authority Gypsy and Traveller Panel) thanked Ian Parker and Kim Carron for their report. She congratulated Southampton City Council for its proposed provision of a new site for gypsies and travellers.

Mr Parker answered questions and concerns from those present including:

- the number of pitches required and the robustness of evidence received from the consultants;
- whether the Regional Assembly had powers to decide where pitches should be and the imposition of pitch numbers by the Regional Assembly;
- concerns over GOSE leading this issue and not local authorities;
- concerns over the educational needs of gypsies and travellers;
- concerns about the short timescale available for this work;
- concerns over permanent and temporary sites being located near each other which often caused problems. This needed to be addressed;
- it was suggested that Hampshire should look at how other County-wide associations were addressing the issue;
- there was a need to remember why local authorities were being asked to provide sites;
- there was a suggestion that it would be easier to police authorised sites.
- New Forest District Council raised serious concerns about the quality of the consultants' work.

The Chairman thanked Ian Parker and Kim Carron.

RESOLVED

That the members of HIOW:

- (1) Note the actions of the Hampshire Joint Authority Gypsy and Traveller Panel;
- (2) Resolve to continue to work together through the Joint Authorities Gypsy & Traveller Panel to agree the numbers and broad locations of permanent and short stay sites consistent with their local development frameworks incorporating the individual decisions of each council on the provision and funding of these facilities;
- (3) Approve the proposed method (set out in the report) to deliver recommendations for levels of gypsies' and travellers' accommodation in Hampshire to the Regional Assembly; and
- (4) Approve the proposed steps (set out in the report) to identify the need for additional facilities for gypsies and travellers and to include appropriate policies in emerging Local Development Frameworks; support the continuing work of the panel aimed at improving the management of gypsy and traveller issues in Hampshire; and continue to work with adjoining counties and other partner organisations such as the Hampshire Police and the Town and Parish Councils.

18.07 “FIVE MINUTE SLOT” AND FUTURE AGENDA

Consideration was given to a report by the Director which listed potential future matters for discussion. The Director also reported that he and the Chairman had been asked to write an article about joint working, LAAs and Multi Area Agreements for the LGA “First” magazine. He asked Members to let him have any ideas they had for this.

As a new initiative at the Chairman’s suggestion the agenda for the Annual Meeting was tabled for comment, together with the dates for meetings in 2007/2008.

19.07 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Association would be held on 8 June 2007 in the Council Chamber at Southampton Civic Offices commencing at 10.30 am. Political group meetings would be held at 9.30 am.