

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee	River Hamble Harbour Board
Date:	23 September 2011
Title:	Strategic Vision
Reference:	3221
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report covers the first draft of a Strategic Vision for the River Hamble, for approval by the Harbour Board.

2. Background

- 2.1 This draft Strategic Vision for the future of the River Hamble is the work of a sub-group of members of the River Hamble Harbour Management Committee and the River Hamble Harbour Board. It is mainly derived from the results of consultation with members of the River Hamble Harbour Management Committee. The Management Committee has been asked to advise on the requirements for wider consultation. It is the intention to ensure that the diversity of interests on and around the harbour is fully understood and reflected in the Vision. The Vision must be supported by as many interested parties as possible.

- 2.2 A draft is at Appendix 1.

3. Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended that the River Hamble Harbour Board:

- a. Approves the wording of the draft Strategic Vision, and;
- b. Agrees the way forward for further consultation, as advised by the Management Committee.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. A full Equalities Impact Assessment for all the River Hamble Harbour Authority's responsibilities under the Port Marine Safety Code and for the management of moorings has been carried out and this report does not raise any relevant issues not previously covered by that Assessment.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Some elements on this report involve crime and disorder. The River Hamble Harbour Authority seeks to use its powers to reduce crime and disorder in the harbour at every opportunity, working closely with the Police to that end.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? The contents of this report have no direct impact on carbon footprint or energy consumption.
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? The contents of this report include an undertaking that the River Hamble Harbour Authority will be pro-active in monitoring the River for the impact of climate change and identifying the implications.

DRAFT

A strategic vision for the future of the River Hamble

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The River Hamble is a popular waterway and harbour with a unique history and a diverse range of uses. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is the statutory body responsible for River Hamble Harbour Authority (RHHA). The Harbour Board, advised and scrutinised by the Management Committee, is appointed by HCC as the governing body to ensure that the RHHA fulfils its statutory responsibilities. The Harbour Board wishes to provide clear leadership and direction for all interested parties, including the three riparian local authorities, to achieve a universal approach to development within the harbour.
- 1.2. This Strategic Vision seeks to satisfy, as far as possible, all those users who have a stake in the future wellbeing of the River Hamble, whether they are commercial or recreational.

2. Background

- 2.1. The role of the Harbour Authority is to manage, maintain and improve the River Hamble harbour. There have been previous attempts to set out medium to long-term plans for the future of the River Hamble, but these have tended to be over-prescriptive and, for practical reasons, have not withstood the test of time. Whilst the Harbour Authority is not the planning authority for the River Hamble – this role falls to the three riparian authorities (Eastleigh, Fareham, and Winchester) – the Harbour Board nonetheless should play a role in the determination of the harbour's future, primarily by granting or withholding consent for harbour works.
- 2.2. This vision aims to take a pro-active approach to the development of the harbour, both as a centre for a wide range of recreation and as an environmental 'gem'. It seeks to avoid being over-prescriptive and, to that end, stops short of setting out detailed proposals for future development. It is intended, however, that this Strategic Vision will help to guide the Harbour Board when considering future applications for Harbour Works Consent, and will act as a guide to potential applicants.
- 2.3. There has been increasing disquiet among harbour users and other interested parties about the cumulative effects of river development. This is due in part to increased congestion and the diversity of users, but also the lack of a plan by which to guide and test future development and a process that is seen to be transparent in safeguarding the river and its amenities, and

balancing user needs and entitlements, be they environmental, recreational or commercial. As a finite resource, the harbour requires careful husbandry to ensure its well-being as a thriving centre of sustainable marine diversity.

- 2.4. This document attempts to address these issues and set out a vision for future development that seeks to both conserve and adapt to change. A measure of its success will be its adoption by a wide range of interested parties as the primary reference by which development can be fairly judged.
- 2.5. In support of this Strategic Vision, a map is available which depicts every aspect of the harbour and surrounding area to demonstrate how sustainable diversity could co-exist, highlight areas of possible conflict and identify where opportunities may arise to improve the environment and facilities. It will be a dynamic map that will evolve and be refined over time, but with this vision as its reference. Note: the map referred to is in course of production – it is not expected to be complete until after this Vision is published.

3. Vision

- 3.1 Our Vision is to conserve the natural beauty, character and history of the harbour which must be balanced with the needs of the many people who use it. Within these boundaries we will seek to provide a safe, enjoyable harbour that is accessible to as many people as possible. There is a clear desire to balance peoples' diverse enjoyment with the level of activity and usage. There is also a clear commitment to understand the commercial and recreational demands placed on this busy waterway, and to maintain a balance between them.

4. Our objectives are to:

4.1. Maintain Safety

- 4.1.1. Safety of the harbour is the primary responsibility of the Harbour Board (as Duty Holder for the Port Marine Safety Code) and this is the overriding factor when considering applications for works consent. We want to ensure that all users feel safe, and are safe, on the water. We want to ensure that all users understand and respect other users. We want to be able to accommodate the diverse range of craft currently found in the harbour and will seek to ensure that appropriate navigation channels are available to meet their needs, whether in terms of depth, width, accessibility, shelter or crossing places. We recognise the importance of safety for sailing dinghies and other small craft in the harbour and will seek to ensure the preservation of safe areas for these activities. We will also encourage the safe use of the harbour by children and, where possible, provide access for the disabled. Information on safety will be widely disseminated to harbour users.

4.2. Preserve and enhance the harbour's environment.

4.2.1. The Harbour Board will comply with appropriate environmental legislation and associated designations. In carrying out our statutory functions, we must have regard for nature conservation and the environment. Thus, protection of the precious environment of the harbour is a key aspect of the Harbour Authority's statutory responsibilities. It is vital that the salt marshes, mud flats, wooded areas and rural aspect of the river, particularly in the upper reaches, are conserved for future generations. Conservation of archaeological and heritage features, together with efforts to maintain and improve water quality, are essential. The Board is aware of the possible impact of climate change and sea level rise, and will continue to recognise, monitor and raise awareness of the potential effects on the harbour.

4.3. Maintain the character of the harbour.

4.3.1. At this vision's heart is a desire to conserve the natural beauty, character and history of the harbour, which must be balanced with the wishes of the many people who use it. We will seek to maintain the visual balance of the harbour, with its panoramic views. We will also seek to influence local planning authorities and developers to encourage a balance between contemporary design and conservation of the quintessential character of the harbour. We have expressed a firm commitment that, within the Harbour Authority's jurisdiction, we will not permit any further development north of Eastland's Boatyard.

4.4. Ensure commercial and recreational balance.

4.4.1. The Hamble is a busy recreational harbour with a wide appeal to owners of racing and cruising yachts, motor cruisers, sportsboats, RIBs, sailing dinghies, rowing boats, kayaks and canoes. It is also hugely popular for fishing, bird-watching, dog-walking, swimming and simply 'sitting and watching'. Furthermore, it is a vibrant commercial location, with businesses offering almost every service which a boat owner might need. Without the recreational activity, many of the businesses would fail, and without the businesses, many recreational boat owners would be forced to take their business (and money) elsewhere. Thus, it is imperative that a symbiotic balance is maintained, to ensure that businesses investment and employment can thrive alongside the demands of recreational activity.

4.4.2. We understand the great importance of the marine businesses around the harbour and will seek to provide support for the appropriate infrastructure so that economic and employment benefits are realised into the future. These businesses include large commercial marinas, smaller specialist boat yards, mooring providers, specialist engineering and support businesses, and those services such as the water taxi, ferry and river bus which enable non-boat owners to experience the water. The Board will encourage marine businesses around the harbour but expects that they will continue to be flexible, open to change and adaptable to the diverse demands of harbour users in the future.

4.4.3. Equally, we recognise the importance of the harbour as a recreational resource, both as a safe place to keep leisure craft, and as a cruising area for day boats, dinghies, canoes and kayaks. The harbour has something to offer across a wide range of recreational activities. We believe that the harbour should continue to meet this recreational demand and will seek to ensure that such activities can take place safely and with the minimum of conflict between users. Making space for recreational activity is important but we recognise the need to balance this against strong demand for moorings and berths.

4.5. Ensure our financial future

4.5.1. The Harbour Authority forms part of Hampshire County Council, but it is largely self funding (through the collection of Harbour Dues). The Harbour Authority is a 'not-for-profit' organisation and the Board is committed to ensuring that any surplus is re-invested in the infrastructure of the harbour.

4.6. Respond to future demand

4.6.1. There are considerable pressures on the Harbour Authority and a great deal of competition for space on the harbour. In balancing future demand, the Harbour Board will seek to preserve public access to the harbour for all types of recreation (with appropriate restrictions to ensure safety of navigation and environmental protection). It will work with local planning authorities to maintain access to the shoreline for non-boat users, and seek to encourage the provision of facilities for non-boating visitors, including public toilets, picnic sites, etc., where opportunities arise.

4.6.2. The Board aspires to enhance the space available for dinghy sailing and other small craft activities, and to give due consideration to 'zoning' where practicable. Where the achievement of this aspiration involves the clearing of moorings from specific areas the Board will seek the agreement of The Crown Estate, but accepts that moorings elsewhere will almost certainly need to be reconfigured or expanded to accommodate displaced boats. Competition for space is not limited to the water and the Board recognises the importance of adequate facilities for car and trailer parking, and will maintain a dialogue with local planning authorities to encourage the inclusion of parking issues on their agendas. The Board wishes to encourage access to the facilities of the River for boat owners of all means.

5. Consultation, engagement, process and consensus building

5.1. Our vision is for a harbour where there is understanding between all interested parties and we will work towards building consensus between these individuals and groups. Consultation and engagement will be open and

accessible. We will also work to disseminate information about the harbour, how it is managed and operates, its history and environment, so as to inform local communities and build ownership of this valuable resource. To this end, the Harbour Board seeks to encourage a more 'joined-up' approach to planning and development in the harbour, working in cooperation with the local planning authorities where possible. Consideration of applications for Harbour Works Consent will take into account the cumulative effects of development, but only retrospectively (i.e. the Harbour Board can generally only consider what has already happened, not what might happen in the future). The Harbour Authority has a crucial part to play in the marine consents process and the Harbour Board remains determined to exercise this role independently from the other consenting bodies.