

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Date:	31 March 2016
Title:	Highways Development Control Arrangements
Reference:	7279
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to set out the approach to achieving revenue savings for the Highway Development Control service and to seek approval for delegated authority to implement changes to the delivery of the service and for measures to support more efficient ways of delivering the service, to include negotiations with the District and Borough councils for the implementation of these revisions and associated efficiencies as part of the district and borough agency arrangements.

1.2. This paper seeks to

- Set out the background to Highway Development Control Agency Agreements;
- Set out the existing financial settlements for undertaking the Agency responsibilities and the revenue savings required to support the Transformation to 2017 programme;
- Review the level of service provided through the Agency Agreements on behalf of the County Council;
- Identify costed changes to the current arrangements to support the planned reduction in financial support but without diminishing the level of service provided.

2. Contextual information

2.1. Hampshire County Council has Highway Development Control Agency Agreements in place with the following district councils:

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Hart District Council
- Havant Borough Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council

- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council

The highway authority has a statutory role in providing highway advice on planning applications. The Agency Agreements make provision for the statutory function of the highway authority to be undertaken by district councils on behalf of Hampshire County Council. The Agency Agreement sets out the extent of the service to be provided, including a limit on the size of applications covered by these arrangements. Hampshire County Council continues to provide the highway response to those applications which exceed the Agency limits.

Hampshire County Council also provides the Agency level service for the three remaining districts – East Hampshire District Council, Gosport Borough Council and New Forest District Council.

The County Council currently supports the Agency Agreements with an annual financial expenditure of £735,647. This is split between the district councils on a proportional basis taking account of factors such as the size of district and historical staff levels.

- 2.2. In October 2015, the County Council approved proposals for realising revenue savings as part of the Transformation to 2017 programme. The proposals included a review of the Development Control service and this paper sets out measures to realise savings from the current expenditure on this service.
- 2.3. It is considered that adjustments to the delivery of the service could be made to make it more efficient and less resource intensive. This report makes recommendations which it is considered will help contribute to the Council's revenue savings target with minimal impact upon this particular service.
- 2.4. This report seeks delegated authority for the County Council to introduce the revised ways of working to support the delivery of the service through the Agency Agreements following the revenue savings. Changes to two areas of service delivery are proposed to support a new model of working to enable the revenue savings to be realised.

Introduction of Standing Advice

- 2.5. The current Agency Agreements require the districts to provide highway authority responses on all residential applications below 100 units in size. Within this, a proportion of applications consist of proposals for five dwellings or fewer. It is proposed to replace the requirement for Agency engineers to respond to individual applications of this size, and instead introduce Standing Advice which clearly sets out for the planning authority the information needed in order to determine the application on highway grounds. This will replace the need for the highway authority to be formally consulted on each application of five dwellings or fewer in most cases.

- 2.6. The Standing Advice will provide the statutory response of the highway authority to all applications of five dwellings or fewer and will be ready in advance of 1 April 2017.
- 2.7. To supplement this it is also proposed to develop further specific advice in the following areas to support the delivery of the Highway Development Control service:
- Establish clear and detailed guidelines on the preparation of Transport Assessments, and the development thresholds for when they will be required;
 - Clear and concise summary of technical information, including visibility splay standards, turning requirements and common application of these geometric standards to a range of scenarios;
 - Detailed guidance on provision of new accesses to serve development, including advice on when vehicle cross overs would be appropriate.

Pre-application charging

- 2.8 The County Council has recently introduced pre-application charging for those applications that it provides highway advice on. It is considered that this charging arrangement can equally apply on a proportional basis to district councils providing pre-application highway advice under the Agency Agreements. This could provide district councils with an income stream to supplement their resources in this area.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The annual budget the County Council provides across the eight district Agency Agreements is £735,647.
- 3.2. It is proposed to secure £300,000 savings from the Agency Agreement budget in line with the revenue savings the County Council is introducing across all departments. This will contribute to the £14.7 million savings identified for the Economy, Transport and Environment department.
- 3.3. The impact of the revenue savings has been tested against the level of resource the County Council provides to undertake this function in the three districts without Agency Agreements. This shows that approximately 60% of planning applications consulted upon are for 5 or fewer dwellings. The service provided to these three districts by the highway authority is achieved within a budget consistent with that proposed for the rest of the service, i.e. with the revenue savings applied. This is without the introduction of Standing Advice, and therefore the service provides individual responses to applications of five or fewer dwellings. This demonstrates that districts will be provided with sufficient resource to continue to deliver the service following revenue reductions and the changes to delivery of the service set out in this report.

- 3.4. Following discussions with colleagues at the district and borough councils to determine the best means of implementation, the reductions will be applied to all district councils who have Agency Agreements in place on a proportional basis.
- 3.5. To implement these changes, it will be necessary for Highways Development Control to develop and implement the standard advice guidance and associated technical advice.

4. Performance

- 4.1. The changes that would be introduced as a result of this decision will directly contribute to the County Council's approved revenue savings programme. The savings will be supported by the changes to the delivery of the service to enable the more efficient provision of advice under the terms of the Agency Agreements.
- 4.2. The statutory requirement to provide highway advice and recommendations on planning applications will be maintained and this will be supported by the improvements set out in this paper.

5. Future direction

- 5.1. It will be necessary to undertake detailed negotiations with the districts to agree the new arrangements and to develop the proposed improvements set out in this report for implementation by 1 April 2017. It is envisaged that these meetings will be undertaken within the first half of 2016 with all eight district councils and will also be used to agree the most effective way of implementing the changes.
- 5.2. An interim progress report will be provided for the Executive Member for Environment and Transport Decision Day on 15 September 2016. It is anticipated that by this time, revised agency agreements will have been agreed and the details of the new arrangements will have been finalised.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport gives approval for the revised Highways Development Control service provision, including services provided under Agency arrangements with district councils as outlined in this report, to be implemented by 1 April 2017.
- 6.2. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to make all necessary arrangements to prepare, negotiate, and enter into revised agreements with individual districts reflecting the changes set out in this report, including the budget allocation for financial year 2017/18.

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):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Transformation to 2017 Revenue Savings Proposals	<u>Reference</u> 6888	<u>Date</u> 15 September 2015
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

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.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The decision will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics as the proposals will maintain the same level of service as currently provided. The focus of this decision is on the delivery arrangements to support the level of existing service.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No direct impact

3. Climate Change:

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? - No Direct Impact

3.1. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? - No Direct Impact