

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Regulatory Committee
<b>Date:</b>	28 July 2010
<b>Title:</b>	Site Liaison Panels
<b>Reference:</b>	1901
<b>Report From:</b>	Head of Planning and Development

**Contact name:** Richard Read

**Tel:** 01962 846727

**Email:** richard.read@hants.gov.uk

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. There are a number of Site Liaison Panels for a variety of mineral and waste sites within Hampshire. The Panels are considered important forums, which Members and planning officers play an important part. However, most of the Panels are administered by County Council staff in organising meetings, arranging documentation and note taking. Given the current budgetary constraints partly caused by the loss of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant this administrative activity can no longer be funded.
- 1.2. The Director of Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment has concluded that the Panels should be supported by Members and planning officers, but that the relevant site operators be requested to resource the administration. The Regulatory Committee has been asked for views on this proposal.

#### 2. Site Liaison Panels

- 2.1. Over the years the County Council has promoted the setting up of Site Liaison Panels as a forum for the community and mineral and waste operators. The appendix to this report sets out details of the panels that the County Council is involved with. Most of the Panels are organised by the County Council and they are attended by Councillors – County, District and Parish, where appropriate – and relevant officers. Frequently a County Councillor chairs the meetings.
- 2.2. There is no doubt the Panels perform a valuable function, especially for controversial sites. Issues over site development and operation can be more readily resolved through dialogue between operators and the community. They also assist in the regulation of sites. However, the panels do depend on

the agreement of the operators to participate. Moreover, the County Council cannot require an operator to engage in a Panel.

- 2.3. However, the Panels do generate significant costs and the Director of Environment has become concerned at the costs involved. This cost is principally concerned with administration eg organising venues, documentation and note taking. Given the number of panels involved it is estimated that these amount to at least £10,000 per annum. Given the other priorities of the planning service, the pressure to make efficiencies, and the withdrawal of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant this level of support can no longer be sustained.

### **3. Future for Panels**

- 3.1. The County Council would still continue to support the use of Site Liaison Panels. Accordingly, Members could still attend meetings and offer their services to chair them. Likewise planning officers will still attend to provide advice. The change is how the administrative burden should be resourced.
- 3.2. One option is to transfer this to administrative staff, instead of using the more expensive resources of planning officers. However, there is a shortage of administrative resource and there are no opportunities to expand this.
- 3.3. An alternative would be to request that the operators assume the responsibility for the administration of panels. Already a number of Panels are organised by operators eg New Milton Sand and Ballast Company for Downton Manor Farm Quarry. It is also common practice with many other County Councils not to be involved in the administration of Panels and leave it with operators. In these cases there is no evidence that the public interest is in any way jeopardised. Moreover, many operators welcome this responsibility as they feel Panels are a benefit to them.
- 3.4. The main disadvantage with this approach is that some operators will not take on the responsibility of organising Site Liaison Panels. However, it is judged this would be a low risk for the reason referred to above. Where an operator does not wish to co-operate it is because they either do not have the resources or are unwilling to participate. It is felt that most operators in Hampshire do not fall into this category.
- 3.5. Accordingly, the Director of Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment endorses the role of Site Liaison Panels in meeting corporate objectives. However, the relevant mineral and/or waste operators should be asked to take responsibility for the administration of Site Liaison Panels. The Regulatory Committees is asked to endorse this action.

### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 Given the current budgetary situation the proposal is reasonable. In reality it will have little impact on the work of the Regulatory Committee. Site Liaison Panels have always been dependent on the cooperation of operators and the

Committee has never been able to impose them. The main difference will be that the continuation of existing Panels will be dependent on operators resourcing the administration. With regard to new sites the Committee will have to request the operators to provide site liaison arrangements.

- 4.2 It is considered that the Committee should endorse the Director of Environment's approach and note that the Head of Planning and Development will report to Members on operator's reactions to the revised arrangements.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 That the Regulatory Committee welcomes the Director of Environment's support for Site Liaison Panels for mineral and waste sites and recognises the need for the relevant operating companies to be requested to provide the administrative support for organising the meetings.
- 5.2 That the Head of Planning and Development advises Members on the progress of the new arrangements.

### Links to the Corporate Strategy

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