

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Environment and Transportation Select Committee
Date of meeting:	29 June 2010
Report Title:	New Coalition Government
Report From:	Director of Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To inform Members of those policies presently announced by the new Coalition Government which impact on the activities of the Environment Department.

2. National Planning Framework

2.1. Regional Strategies such as the South East Plan are to be abolished, freeing each local council to decide on the amount of housebuilding and other development in its area. There is to be a new National Planning Framework which will set out national economic and environmental priorities, but there will be no tier of plan between this and Local Development Frameworks prepared by borough and district councils. Various bodies, including the County Council's Network and Royal Town Planning Institute, have urged the Government to consider having some form of strategic planning at county/sub-regional level - something which has existed since the 1960s but to date nothing is proposed along these lines. Details of how the new arrangements will work have yet to be published, which is creating considerable uncertainty.

Other related changes

2.2. A range of other changes announced by the Government include new powers to stop 'garden grabbing' - by de-classifying gardens as brownfield land - and creating a new designation to protect green areas of local importance. The latter may enable the continued protection of Hampshire's Strategic and Local Gaps - designations which the last Government deleted.

3. Energy Efficiency

- 3.1. Legislation will be introduced to improve energy efficiency in British homes and businesses, to promote low carbon energy production and to secure energy supplies.
- 3.2. This Bill would deliver a national programme of energy efficiency measures to homes and businesses. It may also introduce powers to regulate the emissions from coal-fired power stations, reform energy markets to deliver security of supply and ensure fair competition, and put in place a framework to guide the development of a smart grid that will revolutionise the management of supply and demand for electricity.

Key Elements

- 3.3. The main elements of the Bill are implementation of a 'Green deal' to deliver energy efficiency to homes and businesses – delivering a framework including potential incentives to energy suppliers and households that will transform the provision of energy efficiency in the UK by enabling a 'pay as you save' approach.
- 3.4. The Bill **may** also contain measures to:
- (i) regulate the carbon emissions from coal-fired power stations;
 - (ii) reform energy markets to deliver security of supply and ensure fair competition;
 - (iii) introduce a framework to guide the development of a smart grid that will revolutionise the management of supply and demand for electricity;
 - (iv) require energy companies to provide more information on energy bills in order to empower consumers and to ensure fair access to energy supplies;
 - (v) ensure that North Sea infrastructure is available to all companies to ease the exploitation of smaller and more difficult oil and gas fields; and
 - (vi) create a Green Investment Bank to support investment in low carbon projects to transform the economy.

4. Minerals and Waste Planning

- 4.1. There has been no indication that the Government is going to change the arrangements for minerals and waste planning being dealt with by counties and unitaries. Indeed, the Conservative Party's Green Paper on planning issued just before the election proposed business as usual. This will mean Hampshire County Council will still have responsibility for Minerals and Waste Development Frameworks and related development management.

4.2. However, the same Green Paper did propose the repatriation of sand and gravel targets to mineral planning authorities like the County Council. How these are to be calculated in the future is still under discussion. It is possible some guidance may appear as part of the proposed National Planning Framework.

5. Waste

5.1. The Government is to carry out a full review of waste policy in England, looking at the most effective ways of reducing waste, maximising the money to be made from waste and recycling, and how waste policies affect local communities and individual households.

5.2. Announcing the review at the Futuresource conference on 16 June 2010, Environment Secretary [Caroline Spelman](#) said:

“There is an economic and environmental urgency to developing the right waste strategy.

“We have been slowly moving in the right direction with recycling rates. The direction of travel is right – it’s the pace that’s the problem. We need to go faster and we need to go further.”

The review will include:

- (i) the effect of waste policies on local communities and individual households, and how local authorities can best work with people to make the best decisions;
- (ii) maximising the contribution of the waste and recycling industries to the UK economically and environmentally;
- (iii) how we work towards the “zero waste economy”, and drastically reduce the amount of waste created and valuable resources sent to landfill, looking at the entire process from source to end of life; and
- (iv) new approaches to dealing with commercial waste and promoting ‘responsibility deals’, reducing the amount of waste generated by production and retail.

These issues are already being addressed through the work of the waste and resources management section which includes the implementation of the waste and resources forward strategy.

5.3. On the issue of planning, the Minister added that plans were afoot to address apparent anomalies in the planning system which meant that many waste facilities were stuck in the planning system - which the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority claimed meant that facilities were often held up by the same council which was proposing them. She said: "I feel passionately about the need to simplify and speed up the planning system. Eric Pickles will be bringing through a piece of legislation on this issue and there will be a

presumption in favour of sustainable development which includes waste management”.

- 5.4. This topic is linked to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework.

6. Development Management

- 6.1. The previous Government had commissioned a review, known as the Killian-Pretty Review, about the whole process of managing the control of development from pre-application advice to implementation of permissions, including monitoring and enforcement. There is every indication - including advice from the Civil Service - that this will continue. Indeed there may be more emphasis on deregulation. This could take the form of more 'permitted development'. This is unlikely to affect mineral and waste developments but could well alter the control of the County Council's own projects for schools.
- 6.2. On the other hand, the 'localism' agenda, that has been referred to by the Secretary of State and Ministers in Communities and Local Government in the last few weeks, introduces a contrary imperative that could result in more community involvement in planning decisions. Hampshire County Council already undertakes extensive planning consultations, including more extensive engagement of community interests in 'pre-application' negotiations. Accordingly, any changes the Government is likely to introduce will reflect Hampshire good practice.

7. Communities and Local Government

- 7.1. The abolition of regionalism and return of decision making to local authorities and local communities leaves more questions than answers in regard to the strategic planning role of Hampshire County Council in future. There is likely to be a continuing need for coordination across district/borough authority boundaries, particularly where significant levels of development are required to improve economic performance. This will include the need for strategic planning of green infrastructure.

8. Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

- 8.1. A review of governance arrangements for National Parks may result in a greater degree of democratic accountability. This was an issue of concern to the County Council in the ministerial decision on governance for the South Downs National Park, which was not felt to be democratically representative. There are also proposals for a national tree planting campaign.

9. Passenger Transport

- 9.1. Whilst not Government policy to give up concessionary fares, the new Government has announced details on how the funding for the transfer of

concessionary fares to upper tier authorities will take place. This will be through un-ring fenced allocations within the Rate Support Grant.

- 9.2. There are concerns about the adequacy of such funding to support a scheme which meets current levels of service in those districts which have previously offered an enhanced concessionary fares arrangement.
- 9.3. The programme of new railway carriages, which would have included new vehicles and longer trains on the Portsmouth-Cardiff route, is now to be curtailed.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1. At this stage, with the limited information available, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive view on how the new policies will affect the activities of the Department. Members will be kept informed as further details of the new Bills and funding impacts are made known.

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>
Coalition Government documents	Government website

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. None

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Not applicable

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Not applicable

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Not applicable