

G REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

Flooding and Winter Maintenance

- 1 This last reporting period has seen continuing misery caused by flooding. Unusually, this is not from river flooding which takes place in well known areas along the Rivers Ouse, Thames and Colne but from already saturated ground being unable to absorb any more rainfall. The water table has risen in all areas and parts of Buckinghamshire are experiencing problems from rivers, streams and brooks overflowing and the high water table damaging road surfaces and springs that have previously laid dormant starting to flow again. District and County Councils are helping where they can but house owners are learning the hard truth that it is they that are responsible for their own properties.
- 2 A number of roads remained closed for a number of weeks, including Vale Road, Chesham, B416, Windsor Road, Fulmer, Mounthill Lane, Hedgerley/Fulmer, Hambleden Village and Pound Lane, Marlow. Also, this past winter has been the worst for possibly 20 years regarding frost and winter salting runs. The combination of flooding, freezing and thawing has severely affected road structures and surfaces. The Area Managers have estimated costs of up to £1.5 m to rectify the road damage or rebuild drainage systems. A claim for this amount has been submitted to Government. Unless additional payments are made, which seems unlikely, these costs will have to be met out of already hard pressed maintenance budgets for 2001/02.

Local Transport Plan

- 3 The Government Office of the South East congratulated the County Council on producing a good LTP, excelling in some areas of work such as school travel, the Bus Strategy, maintenance and public transport information. The County Council secured nearly £14.5m to spend on transport improvements and modernisation during 2001/02. This represents an increase of 120% over the previous year, a much higher increase than for the south east as a whole. We need to report to GOSE on the progress of our transport strategy by 31 August 2001. The report will emphasise how we are looking at transport in the wider

policy context of the community strategy, Best Value, the rural and urban white papers, social well-being, air quality and access for people with disabilities. Progress towards targets will also be important.

Extra funding needed for bus services in High Wycombe

- 4 Following Arriva's acquisition of the Wycombe Bus Company last December, the company has conducted a major review of its commercial bus services and announced in early March its intention to withdraw a number of unprofitable bus services in the town. To ensure the retention of essential routes, tenders were invited for replacement services costing in excess of £120,000. Funding of these services has been made possible by a change in government regulations which allows up to 20% of the Rural Bus Grant allocation to be used to fund existing services. A £12,000 contribution has been made by Wycombe District Council from Transport Strategy funds.

Planning and School Development

- 5 A joint seminar was held on 8 March, attended by 19 Members who were addressed by officers from Education, Planning, Architects and Safer Routes to Schools. The bulge in secondary school numbers is a problem being faced by the LEA now which will lead to an increase in LEA planning applications, especially at upper schools and for temporary classrooms.

Local Safety & Area Strategy Schemes Programme 2001-02

- 6 The Programme for this new financial year was approved on 21 March. This followed extensive internal discussions and external discussions via the Local Committees and Policy Advisory Group. There are 409 schemes that are included in the first year of the programme. Some of these are ongoing, many are new following the assessment of requests to the Local Committees over the past year.

Hypothecation (Safer Roads Campaign)

- 7 The casualty statistics from the third quarter (of the first year) of this two year pilot project became available during February. These showed that across the Thames Valley Region during the first nine months of the project, speed related casualties had reduced by 8.6% against a target of 4%. In Buckinghamshire the figure was similar and speed related fatal casualties have been reduced by 50%. These are very encouraging early results.

Wendover and Tingewick Bypasses

- 8 Whilst the majority of the land compensation and land purchase payments have been made, approximately £850k remains to be paid. It is hoped that a contractual dispute will be settled later this year. Possibly about £200,000 remain to be paid. There are also a number of land acquisition payments outstanding which could total £300,000.

Aylesbury Market Square – Bollards

- 9 The bollards to prevent unauthorised access to the pedestrianised area of the Market Square have undergone trials and testing on site during February and March in preparation for the final switch on in early April. Indications are that the system is now working satisfactorily notwithstanding some of the previous problems with the system.

Further SPAs in Bucks

- 10 Discussions continue with Aylesbury Vale and Chiltern Districts. The intention is to form partnerships that will respect each authorities' needs whilst seeking to ensure better compliance with waiting and loading restrictions.

Motorway Service Areas

- 11 Inquiry concerning the Burtley Wood site on the A40/A355 junction at Beaconsfield will not now re-open in May as previously announced. Likely to be major inquiry in future into all outstanding schemes on M40 and M25 western sector.

Regional Planning Guidance: Review of County Structure Plan

- 12 The new Regional Planning Guidance figure reported by the Deputy Leader represents a major victory for the County Council and its District Council colleagues who campaigned long and hard to persuade the Government not to confirm the much higher figures which it had previously considered. The newly-confirmed RPG9 figure will now feed into the Review of the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan, one of the first tasks of which will be to establish an interim apportionment of the new housing requirement between the Milton Keynes Council area and the remainder of the county.

Stoke Hammond/Linslade Western Bypass

- 13 We are unable to progress this scheme and publish the CPO/SROs until we have satisfactorily concluded negotiations with the potential developers of adjacent land to finalise their contribution to the schemes. Negotiations are on-going.

R ROYSTON

CABINET MEMBER, PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION