

**COMMENTS OF THE PLANNING AND
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Planning Green Paper - Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change.

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Planning and Transportation that outlined the main proposals contained in the Government's recently published Green Paper on Planning: Delivering Fundamental Change, a proposed response to it from the County Council, and the decision taken on it by the Cabinet on 12 February 2002. A copy of the report, marked 'D', is filed with these minutes. Consideration was also given to a press release from the County Councils Network about an alternative model in its response to the Planning Green Paper. A copy of this press release was circulated before the meeting and is filed with these minutes.

In the ensuing discussion a number of comments and points were raised by members; including the following:

- Whilst it was acknowledged that delays occurred under the existing planning system, these did not arise primarily at County Council level and most commonly arose in relation to the completion of Local Plans and with planning applications referred to the Secretary of State for determination by Inspectors at Local Planning Inquiries.
- It was suggested that time limits should be prescribed for producing Local Planning Frameworks and for consultations on planning applications.
- At District Council level, there were problems and delays caused by parochialism that could be overcome by County Councils which were in a better position to take a wider perspective on planning issues.
- At regional planning level there was a lack of accessibility for the public and a democratic deficit as key strategic planning decisions would be taken by the Secretary of State, remote from local issues and opinion.
- The gap between the district and regional levels is too large to span without an intermediary step. The removal of the County level would result in a loss of expertise and credibility which could not be quickly replaced at regional level by a new organisation with no track record, expertise or reputation for efficiency and expertise.

- As the proposed new planning system develops it would be important to involve District Councils collaboratively to ensure a consistent approach. County Councils were in an ideal position to undertake this role.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Commission be recommended:

- (a) To consider the comments made by the Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee:
- (b) To endorse the comments set out in Part B of the report as the County Council's response to the Green Paper.