Abstract: This report seeks homologation of the action taken by the Director of Planning & Transport in consultation with the Convener and the Director of Finance in respect of the commissioning of a shoppers survey in Forfar as part of the Forfar Town Centre Study.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

(a) notes that Colin Buchanan & Partners have been appointed to undertake the Forfar Town Centre Study; and

(b) homologate the action taken by the Director of Planning & Transport in consultation with the Convener and the Director of Finance in authorising Colin Buchanan & Partners to undertake a shoppers survey as part of the Study at an additional cost of £3,000.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Members will recall that it was agreed previously that a study be commissioned into the future of Forfar Town Centre. Essentially, the study aims to identify ways of maintaining and strengthening the diversity of Forfar Town Centre as an attraction of the town. The study will also identify opportunities for environmental enhancement in conjunction with traffic management aimed at making Forfar a more convenient, pleasant and safer town in which to live as well as visit.

2.2 Following a competitive tendering and selection process, Colin Buchanan & Partners have been appointed to undertake the study. The study team will also comprise Donaldsons who will provide expertise on retailing and economic development and Gillespies who will provide urban design and landscape expertise.

3 THE STUDY

3.1 The study commenced in mid-December 1999 and must be completed by the end of March 2000 as it is being funded entirely within the current financial year.
3.2 A key element of the study is a survey of the town centre retailers. This will take the form of a questionnaire which will be distributed to all businesses including, for example, pubs and restaurants within the core central area. The survey will be conducted during the second half of January and will probe views on trading conditions and future opportunities.

3.3 The consultants also recommended that a shopper survey be undertaken to identify expenditure levels, trip frequency, trip purpose and mode of travel and perceived strengths/weaknesses of the town. The information will give a clear indication of the views of consumers which are vital to the future of the town centre. However, the consultants confirmed that this survey could not be accommodated within the existing budget for the overall study (£10,000) and quoted an additional cost of £3,000 for the work. This assumes some 250 interviews over two weekdays and a Saturday, together with associated six minute pedestrian counts every hour.

3.4 To be effective and to fit into the timescale for the study (completed by the end of the current financial year) the shoppers survey had to be undertaken broadly at the same time as the survey of the town centre retailers i.e. during the latter half of January. It was felt that this would be an extremely valuable exercise and therefore the Director of Planning & Transport in consultation with the Convener and Director of Finance authorised Colin Buchanan & Partners to proceed with the shoppers survey without delay.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 As stated earlier, the additional cost of the shoppers survey is £3,000. This cost can be met from the Planning Department’s Revenue Budget for the current financial year.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/RM/KW
18 January 2000

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport