

7 NOVEMBER 2001

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 7 November 2001.

p Cllr S A Hayes (Chairman)
p Cllr M J Kendal (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

p P H Cummings
p T J Droogleever
e P C Greenfield

Councillors:

p Mrs M D Holding
p B Rickman
p C A Wise

In Attendance:

Councillors:

K F Ault
F J Bright
W R Catt
J E Coles
J D Heron

Councillors:

Mrs M Humber BA
Mrs M J Robinson
D N Scott
M H Thierry

"amended at Council on 17 December 2001 - see minute book".

Also Present:

Mr B Birks, Tenant Representative

Officers Attending:

D Yates, N Gibbs, C Malyon, D Atwill, Ms J Bateman, D Brown, Ms V Brownsea, A Groom, P Hughes, J Mascall, Miss G O'Rourke and J Ward.

100. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2001, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to Councillor Bright being recorded as present in place of Councillor Burdle.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations of interest were made.

102. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

103. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and the Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

104. STILLWATER PARK (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered a report detailing expressions of interest received in the possible sale of Stillwater Park.

RESOLVED:

That the expressions of interest be noted.

105. READMISSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting.

106. STILLWATER PARK (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the results of possible market interest in the disposal of Stillwater Park and the options now available for the future of the site.

Mr Broughton, speaking on behalf of the Independent Park Homes Advisory Service, addressed the Cabinet.

Mr Broughton was concerned that, although earlier in the year the residents had been given assurances that nothing would be done against their wishes, this now appeared to be happening. The Chairman of the Residents' Association had undertaken a lot of work to investigate a residents' buy out and this had all been to no avail. The site had subsequently been re-valued at a much higher figure which had meant that neither the residents nor the Town Council had been in a position to pursue a purchase. The residents had voted unanimously against a purchase by a Housing Association.

Mr Broughton was also concerned that a number of people were visiting the site to view the area and take photographs without any liaison with the residents.

Councillor Thierry addressed the Cabinet.

He commented that there were 69 families resident at Stillwater Park who had specific needs and were in a unique position. Stillwater Park, as an asset, had to be considered as secondary to the needs of the residents. The residents were of the view that a purchase by a social landlord would not provide them with any security and they would prefer public ownership. The long term interests of the residents would not be served by sale to a Registered Social Landlord.

Councillor Thierry said that the bid from Ringwood Town Council was the only bid that was not motivated by profit and he could not support any other proposals.

Councillor Robinson also addressed the Cabinet. Councillor Robinson supported the comments made by Councillor Thierry. She also commented that the residents did not support a sale to either a private company or a Registered Social Landlord. Councillor Robinson indicated that should the Cabinet recommend the sale of Stillwater Park to a Registered Social Landlord she would wish to call in the decision.

A member expressed the view that the opportunities for new homes in the district were very limited and therefore the Council needed to review all of its assets. There were a number of families in Bed and Breakfast and all options needed to be considered. A Housing Association was a 'not for profit' organisation and the member was confident that the interests of the residents of Stillwater Park would be safeguarded should a Registered Social Landlord take over the site.

The Chairman of the Cabinet commented that the security of the long term future of the residents would be best met by a Registered Social Landlord.

After detailed discussion the Cabinet

RESOLVED:

- (a) That further discussions be held with the Registered Social Landlord who submitted the highest preliminary bid received from a Housing Association with a view to inviting that Registered Social Landlord to submit a firm bid; and
- (b) That a further report be made back to the Cabinet as soon as possible.

107. INSURANCE PREMIUMS – 2001/2002 (REPORT C).

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the increases in insurance premiums above the Council's original budget and the reasons for the increases.

RESOLVED:

That a supplementary estimate from the Housing Revenue Account reserve be approved in the sum of £10,160 to meet the additional costs of insurance premiums for 2001/02.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary estimate from the General Reserve be approved in the sum of £36,805 to meet the additional cost of the insurance premiums for 2001/02;

108. PARKING PROVISION ON DEVELOPMENT SITES (REPORT D).

The Cabinet received a report detailing the comments of the Economy and Planning Review Panel which had expressed concern in relation to parking provision on development sites.

The Portfolio Holder commented that whilst PPG 13 might not be appropriate for the district it could not be considered as a reason for refusing a planning application. The Council needed to play a leading role in controlling traffic management. In particular, the Council needed to be proactive in terms of decriminalisation of parking and time limits on removal of abandoned vehicles. It was noted that a report would be produced in the near future proposing the introduction of a flexible traffic management scheme that would benefit both residents and visitors. All members would be involved in the production of an acceptable district wide scheme that would also link in with County Council initiatives.

After discussion it was:

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the views of the Economy and Planning Review Panel, including the Panel's desire for an early review of the Council's current standards be noted;
- (b) That, as soon as possible, report(s) be brought before the Economy and Planning Review Panel and Cabinet recommending changes to the Council's current policies and standards, having regard to:
 - (i) the final adoption by the county and unitary councils in Hampshire of Hampshire Parking Strategy and Standards 2001
 - (ii) concerns expressed by members about the specific circumstances of New Forest District
 - (iii) representations received regarding the relevant policies in the deposited First Alteration to the District Local Plan

- (c) That no changes be made to the Council's current policies and standards, in advance of consideration of the report(s) referred to in recommendation (b) above.

109. EXPENDITURE PLAN AND FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (REPORT E).

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the position to date on the Expenditure Plan proposals and the Financial Strategy.

Members noted that it was still very early in the budget process. The Rate Support Grant settlements would not be announced until the end of December. A detailed budget would be presented to Cabinet in January which would include feedback from Review Panels and Committees. The Cabinet would consider the final budget recommendations in February.

In discussing the issues the Leisure Portfolio Holder was of the view that the proposed increase in Beach Hut fees for NFDC residents should be reduced from £50 to £25.

The Environment Portfolio Holder commented that the Environment Review Panel were considering further the issue of charging for the removal of rats and mice. In relation to public toilets it was noted that there was a budget commitment of £900,000 over the next four years for improvements to public toilets. However, there was a need to rationalise the provision of facilities across the district and the Review Panel were giving further consideration to the possible closure of some toilets.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder commented that the budget process, under the new procedures, was very open and democratic and he expressed his thanks to the Director of Resources and his staff for their hard work in drawing the issues together.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, after consideration of all the items contained in the report and in light of the comments received from the review panels and Committees, as detailed in Appendix 2 of Report E to the Cabinet; the expenditure plan proposals be approved, subject to the proposed increase in Beach Hut fees for NFDC residents being reduced from £50 to £25;
- (b) That the approach to the rationalisation of the number of revenue reserves outlined in Report E be approved;
- (c) That when the Council agree the budget in February 2002, they be recommended to agree:
 - (i) the Financial Strategy as set out in paragraph 6 of this report; and
 - (ii) the proposed changes to the use of the General Reserve Fund.

- (d) That the approach to the prudent use of reserves for the financial year 2002/2003 be noted; and
- (e) That further work continues in order to identify further reductions within net expenditure in order to minimise that use of reserves.

110. PROPOSED CHANGES TO IMPROVEMENT GRANT POLICY (REPORT F).

The Cabinet considered a report proposing two minor changes to the current Improvement Grant Policy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the HRA policy be changed to prioritise applicants who are on an income related benefit or if they are over 60 have an income less than the Minimum Income Guarantee level and with savings of less than £6,000; and
- (b) That a change to the Renovation Grant policy to set a limit of £30,000 for each application be approved.

111. NEW FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (REPORT G).

The Cabinet considered a report setting out a brief summary of the responses made to the consultation paper on the establishment of a New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership.

Members noted that there had been a positive response to the consultation. The first meeting of the Partnership was scheduled for 14 November 2001 when they would consider their terms of reference and how the Partnership fitted into the broader context of Community Planning and the Community Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cllrs Hayes and Robinson be appointed to serve on the New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership; and
- (b) That the Chief Executive be appointed as the deputy for either member on the LSP.

112. ELECTRICAL SUPPLY, APPLETREE COURT (REPORT H).

The existing electrical main at Appletree Court had reached its maximum capacity and needed to be replaced. The completion of the heating upgrade scheme, the installation of the CCTV Control room and platform lift for the disabled could not be completed without an increased electrical supply. The electrical supply company advised that they needed 12 weeks notice before they could carry out the work and therefore, urgent approval for the works was necessary, in advance of the Council meeting on 17 December, 2001.

RESOLVED:

That, it be noted that in accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4, the Cabinet and the Finance and Support Portfolio Holder, support the Director of Resources in his decision to approve the following virements as a matter of urgency:

Corporate and Finance Portfolio	Budget £
1. Appletree Court – Council Chamber refurbishment (Code 108105)	18,000
2. Appletree Court – Replace external lighting lanterns (Code 108103)	4,000
3. Town Hall, Lymington – Replace Heating Pipes (Code 108405)	8,000
4. Appletree Court – Refurbishment of Heating Systems	<u>8,000</u>
	<u>38,000</u>
Crime and Disorder Portfolio	
1. CCTV Programme (Code 103051)	<u>8,000</u>
	TOTAL <u>£46,000</u>

113. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES.**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Cllr Dow be appointed to serve on the Bournemouth Airport Consultative Committee; and
- (b) That Cllrs Shand and N Smith be appointed to serve on the New Forest Transportation Strategy Panel.

114. TECHNICAL AMENDMENT TO COUNCIL CONSTITUTION.

In the light of recent legislation the Cabinet recommended a number of technical amendments to the Council's constitution.

RECOMMENDED:

That the first sentence of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee's terms of reference be amended as follows:

(words struck through to be deleted, words in bold italics to be added)

"To be responsible for all matters relating to the ~~administration of licences~~ **licensing and registration functions** determined by the Council under Part B, and the functions relating to public rights of way determined by the Council under Part I, of Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000"

115. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2000/2001 (REPORT I).

The Cabinet received a copy of the Annual Audit letter summarising the work undertaken by the District Auditor for the previous year. Overall the picture was one of satisfaction from the Auditors with some areas needing further development in the near future. The Council was aware of these and was taking action to address them.

Ms T Weaver and Mr N Childs from District Audit made a presentation to the Cabinet. It was noted that this was the first year that the Audit had operated under a new Code of Practice. The Council had for the last 18 months been experiencing a period of considerable change but had still made good progress on a number of key issues. The Council also had in place a good performance management system.

In particular the Best Value Performance Audit had been very positive and had showed significant levels of commitment throughout the Council. There was still a need to rationalise the Best Value Review Programme.

District Audit were of the view that the Council had made significant progress in developing its new political structures but some further work was needed on defining the role of review panels.

It was noted that a White Paper due to be published in 2002 would differentiate between Audit and Inspection and would place all authorities into four different levels of performance. Based on New Forest District Council's current performance, District Audit were of the view that the Council would probably be placed in the upper levels of achievement.

Cabinet

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RESOLVED:

That the Annual Audit Letter for 2000/2001 be noted.

CHAIRMAN

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