

2 APRIL 2003

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 2 April 2003.

p Cllr M J Kendal (Chairman)
p Cllr T M Russell (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

e P C Greenfield
p J D Heron
p Mrs M D Holding

Councillors:

p B Rickman
p C A Wise
p P R Woods

In Attendance:

Councillors:

K F Ault
W R Catt
F J Bright
F R Harrison

Councillors:

Mrs M J Robinson
D N Scott
D B Tipp
Mrs P A Wyeth

Also in Attendance:

Mr A Dougherty and Mrs P White, Tenant Representatives.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, N Gibbs, C Malyon, Ms J Bateman, Miss G O'Rourke and J Ward and for part of the meeting C Elliott, P Hughes, N Miller, R Payne and K Smith.

140. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2003, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Harrison declared an interest in Minute No. 147.

142. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Mr Cooper addressed the Cabinet.

Mr Cooper queried the reason why the Inspector at the National Park Enquiry had been told that the Council in principle supported the concept of a National Park. He did not feel that the Council had considered equal or if not more advantageous forms of management bodies. He asked that the Council should explain to the electorate how they had given their unequivocal support to the National Park concept as a principle contrary to the majority wishes of the residents of the area. Mr Cooper was of the view that the Council should reverse their decision and advocate a tailor made authority to suit the unique requirements of the area.

In response the Cabinet were advised that the Council had welcomed the recognition given by the National Park Designation Order that the New Forest meets National Park criteria. Similarly the Council believed that the area required statutory designation in order to provide it with long-term definition and protection. These views had been amplified in a representation about the principle of designation made to the National Park public inquiry currently being held. The Council's preference for the administration of a designated area was, however, for it to be by means of a tailor-made body constituted through special legislation, and for this reason the Council had objected to the Designation Order. This case had also been put to the public inquiry. Separately, in so far as the boundary for a designated area was concerned the Council had made various representations jointly with other bodies to the inquiry seeking the inclusion of additional land. Notably in Milford-on-Sea Parish and to the west of the Avon Valley.

The Leader of the Council, further asked about the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act and the provisions it made for setting up Conservation Boards for the management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Cabinet was reminded of the very active engagement that the District Council had maintained in conjunction with the County Council during the legislative passage of the CROW Bill through Parliament. Members had met with Ministers and had supported amendments to the Bill proposed by Lord Carnarvon, that might have paved the way towards a special arrangement for the New Forest. These amendments did not in the event succeed. The scope of functions of Conservation Boards was outlined; but Members confirmed that they did not consider such an arrangement coupled with AONB designation of the New Forest was an adequate alternative to the Council's preference for National Park designation coupled with special legislation to set up a tailor-made New Forest Authority.

The Cabinet re-affirmed that its previous responses to the Designation Order (Cabinet Minute 187 of 18th March 2002) together with the evidence submitted on behalf of the Council to the National Park public inquiry remained the District Council's overall position on the proposed designation of the New Forest together with the setting up of a National Park Authority.

143. JOINING THINGS UP THROUGH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered a package of proposals that together would enable the Council to continue to improve. It was important that all members and employees were involved in the process and were aware of the Council's priorities and worked towards them.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and Reports B, C and D to the Cabinet be considered as a package designed to improve the Council's overall performance.

144. THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered the outcomes of the Best Value review into the Council's approach to Sustainability. It was important to note that sustainability was not just about the environment. People's quality of life was affected by economic, social and environmental factors and sustainability was about integrating the needs of the Forest with these factors not just for today but for the long term future. All the Review Panels had considered the report and were broadly supportive of the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals contained in report B to the Cabinet be approved.

145. HEART OF THE FOREST – THE CORPORATE PLAN (REPORT C).

The Council's Corporate Plan – The Heart of the Forest – had been approved by the Council in April 2001 as a consultation draft. Since then the document had been published and a consultation process involving the members, employees and partners had been completed.

The document set out the Council's vision, how it would be delivered and the key priorities for the next 4 years. Members discussed the plan in some detail and made suggestions for consideration in the final drafting. In particular they felt the document should clearly reflect the Council's commitment to addressing crime and disorder issues and should emphasise the importance of sound financial management as the underlying principle on which the Council was based.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That, subject to minor drafting amendments, the Corporate Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 to report C be approved;***

- (b) *That the Key Achievements for 2002/03 as detailed in Appendix 2 to report C be approved for inclusion in the Best Value Performance Plan; and*
- (c) *That the Key Targets 2003/04 as detailed in Appendix 3 to report C and as amended by Review Panels be approved for inclusion in the Best Value Performance Plan subject to:*
 - (i) *Finance and Support Portfolio*
 - *Key Target 5 being amended to read ‘Enable the Parish Web Sites within the District with the Parishes’*
 - *New Key Target 7 be agreed as ‘Complete an asset management review’*
 - *Suggested Key Target 8 be deleted*
 - *Suggested Key Target 9 be agreed and transferred to the Policy and Strategy Portfolio.*

146. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE PLANNING (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered the outcomes of a review into Performance Management and Service Planning. Feedback from the District Auditor, the IDeA and the IIP Assessors has shown that the organisation was well run but lacked a robust service planning and performance management framework.

Members considered proposals for better co-ordination of the Council's activities through stronger planning at a corporate level; a more transparent and inclusive approach to service planning and a strengthening of the Council's financial planning processes.

In relation to the diagrammatic planning framework detailed in the appendices to the report some concern was expressed at the timescales proposed. Members noted that the timescales were only an indicative calendar to illustrate the integration of the processes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals for Performance Management and Service Planning as detailed in report D be approved;
- (b) That the two presentations showing the integrated approach to the Strategic, Financial and Service Planning Framework, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to report D be approved;

- (c) That the principle of adopting budget parcels to enable four-year financial projections be approved, and that a more detailed paper on the implementation of a scheme be prepared for a future meeting of the Cabinet; and
- (d) That the revised Best Value Review Programme as detailed in report D be approved.

147. REVISION TO HANGER FARM SCHEME, TOTTON (REPORT E).

Cllr Harrison declared a personal interest as Chairman of Totton and Eling Town Council. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial and remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion. He did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered revisions to the scheme for the development of facilities at Hanger Farm, Totton. It was noted that the bid for Heritage Lottery funding had received favourable comment and the final outcome would be reported to the Leisure Review Panel in June.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That support for the scheme be confirmed; and
- (b) That from the developers' contributions held for Totton, there be allocations of up to £114,000 from the fund for community facilities and up to £1,838,000 from the fund for recreational open space.

148. PLANNED MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME 2003/2004 (REPORT F).

The Cabinet considered the Planned Maintenance Improvements Programme together with the Environmental Improvements Programme. The Tenants' Representatives expressed concern that there were still some issues of estate improvement such as road widening that were causing problems. In particular, in some areas, emergency vehicles were finding access difficult. It was agreed that the matter would be re-visited with the County Council as Highways Authority to see if any further progress could be made.

RECOMMENDED:

That a virement of £86,000 be made from the Planned Maintenance Programme (decreasing it to £3,500,000) to the Cyclical budget (increasing that to £1,069,000).

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the recommendation above, the schemes listed in Appendices I and II to Report F be approved as the Planned Maintenance and Improvements programme and Environmental Improvements Programme for 2002/2003.

149. DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTIONS – A PROTOCOL ON WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL AND PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS (REPORT G).

The Cabinet considered the final version of the draft Protocol which would guide the future working arrangements between the Council and local councils in respect of public open space and other matters related to developers' contributions.

RESOLVED:

That the protocol document attached at appendix 1 to Report G be approved to guide future working arrangements between New Forest District Council and local Parish and Town Councils.

150. USE OF THE PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT TO IMPROVE PLANNING PERFORMANCE (REPORT H).

The Cabinet considered proposed ways of utilising the Planning Delivery Grant. Members noted that it was a performance reward grant. Whilst NFDC were in the upper quartile of performance other local authorities had received substantially more grant. Members noted that although these authorities had performed well or improved significantly on the Government's development control processing targets and had therefore attracted more grant, they had actually started at, and remained at a lower point than NFDC.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary estimate in the sum of £109,000 be approved for the financial year 2003/4 to utilise the Planning Delivery Grant to be spent on the measures set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 of report H.

151. TOTTON TOWN CENTRE : SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (REPORT I).

The Cabinet considered the proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance for Totton Town Centre. A letter from Marchwood Motorways (Southampton) Ltd was tabled at the meeting and expressed concern at the proposed 'Quality Partnership'. They felt this would place further controls on taxi operators. They also requested that taxis should have the same rights of access to the town centre as buses.

Members agreed amendments that were proposed to alleviate the concerns raised.

Members discussed in detail the continuing delays to all road users caused by the Railway level crossing and expressed some concern over the loss of car parking spaces that would result in the Library Road (Precinct West) car park. Whilst agreeing the report in principle, Members felt it be helpful for them to visit the area to look at the specific issues that had been raised.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Urban Design Framework, as set out in Annex 4 to report I, be adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the New Forest District Local Plan subject to the following amendments:

Taxis:

Paragraph 4.4.0 - Under the bullet point at the fifth line delete the word 'here' and include 'also' so as to read - "taxis will also be given access rights not available for general traffic to ensure that they can penetrate close to central destinations - a more convenient and efficient service".

Paragraph 4.4.1 Delete

Car Parking:

Paragraph 4.8.0 - At the end of this paragraph add the sentence - "This may include residents parking schemes".

Paragraph 4.8.6 - Re-word the first sentence to read - "Design of some parts of the 'pedestrian preference zones' will therefore need to cater for evening parking".

152. UNLAWFUL ENCAMPMENT OF GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND – PROPOSED POLICY (REPORT J).

The Cabinet considered a proposed policy for the eviction of gypsies and travellers from Council owned land that would streamline the Council's approach in dealing with such unlawful encampments.

The Government was currently giving consideration as to whether to impose more onerous obligations on local authorities to provide sites for travellers evicted from land. Members noted that the Council was part of a county wide group of officers and members that was considering ways to address the issue.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the policy at Appendix 1 to report J be approved;
- (b) That the County Council's Gypsy Liaison Officer be utilised to investigate the circumstances of unauthorised encampment and report back to the Council; and
- (c) That those officers of the Council responsible for managing the land that becomes unlawfully occupied by travellers (or such other officers so authorised in writing by the Chief Executive or any Director) be authorised to take decisions (having consulted HCC's Gypsy Liaison Officer) on behalf of the Council as to whether possession proceedings or other legal proceedings be instigated to secure repossession of the land.

153. LEADER+ : APPOINTMENT OF FOREST FRIENDLY FARMING (FFF) PRODUCE CO-ORDINATOR (REPORT K).

The Cabinet considered a bid to the New Forest LEADER + programme for funding of a FFF Produce Co-ordinator to develop the marketing and availability of local produce from the New Forest Heritage area to local outlets.

RESOLVED:

That the bid to the New Forest LEADER+ LAG for a Forest Friendly Farming (FFF) Local Food Co-ordinator be supported and the Council act as employer for the post.

154. GRANTING OF ACCESS RIGHTS AT RUMBRIDGE GARDENS, TOTTON (REPORT L).

The Cabinet noted the detail of urgent action taken by the Director of Resources in accordance with Financial Regulation 1.3 to enable a scheme for affordable housing and a community training facility at Rumbridge Gardens to proceed.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulation 1.3, the Director of Resources set aside Financial Regulations and approved, as a matter of urgency, the granting of access rights for the proposed development for a consideration of £5,000.

155. ERECTION OF 39 DWELLINGS AT NORMANDY WAY, MARCHWOOD (REPORT M).

The Cabinet noted the detail of urgent action taken by the Director of Resources in accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4 to enable a scheme to provide 39 dwellings at Normandy Way, Marchwood to proceed.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4, the Director of Resources has agreed that the Council continues with the scheme at Normandy Way, Marchwood even though it was not now possible to guarantee that even 40% of the scheme costs were recoverable through LASHG. The scheme would however minimise the impact on one of the Council's corporate priorities and could potentially attract 40% grant funding from the Housing Corporation.

156. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ICT (REPORT N).

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Corporate and Finance Review Panel for an updated strategy for the provision of ICT to members and their use of those facilities to be implemented following the May 2003 elections.

The Cabinet noted that the Panel had come to the view that, whilst it would be unreasonable to expect every member to use ICT, there was an expectation that members should be prepared to use it and should be trained to do so. The Cabinet were of the view that, in the interests of the efficient use of resources, ICT equipment should be withdrawn from any member that chose not to use it.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That there be no compulsion on members to use ICT facilities in communications with the Council, but that, in view of the potential efficiency savings, they be strongly encouraged, expected to but not compelled to, make use of ICT equipment. However, in the interests of best use of resources, ICT facilities should be withdrawn from those members who chose not to use them;
- (b) That there be a presumption that those members who are provided with the Council's ICT equipment or whose own equipment is linked to the Council's ICT systems will use that equipment regularly for purposes of communication, and that only electronic means of communication be used wherever information is suitable for transmission by this method;
- (c) That the Council moves to Citrix technology for supporting members' ICT in the first instance, and that the possible implementation of Broadband as an alternative be kept under review. In addition consideration be given to providing members with scanning facilities;

- (d) That members who have private computing equipment in their own homes and who do not wish to be provided with Council-owned equipment be permitted to use those facilities to access the Council's Intranet and Exchange Server, provided that:
 - (i) they subscribe to the Council's security policy;
 - (ii) the equipment is of a minimum specification that meets the requirements of the Head of ICT;
 - (iii) their equipment is fitted with up to date Microsoft Office and related software such as Adobe version 6; up to date anti-virus software and that they subscribe, on a regular basis, to anti-virus software updates;
 - (iv) they have their own Internet Service Provider and connection arrangements; and
 - (v) That a limited financial contribution, at the discretion of the Head of ICT, be made to the provision of limited upgrades or enhanced software to those members who use their own ICT equipment.
- (e) That no significant changes be made to the specification of printers provided to members at this stage, but that
 - (i) The protocol on electronic communication with members (see resolution h), should highlight the need for officers to be aware of the limitations of members' printing capabilities and to send paper copies of documents where such paper copies are likely to be required; and
 - (ii) That members be alive to the need to request paper copies of documents from officers and other sources if printed copies are likely to be required.
- (f) That in relation to training :
 - (i) a mix of training methods be offered to members – classroom based, 1:1; and computer-based; and that care be taken that individual sessions are not too long or too intensive;
 - (ii) a training needs analysis be undertaken to assess the needs of both new and existing members;
 - (iii) a library of training manuals for members' use be maintained at Appletree Court; and
 - (iv) separate training sessions on accessing planning documents be offered.
- (g) That the current arrangements for the distribution of paper copies of meeting papers continues;

- (h) That a protocol for officers corresponding electronically with members be prepared;
- (i) That in relation to personal use of Council facilities by members:
 - (i) A reasonable amount of private use of the Council's ICT equipment installed in members' homes be permitted, provided that such private use is strictly in accordance with the Council's ICT Security Policy, and that, as a guide, 1-2 hours private on-line time per week at off peak periods be regarded as reasonable;
 - (ii) It be noted that a review of the Council's ICT Security Policy is being undertaken by Consultants; and
 - (iii) Members be reminded of the contents of the Security Policy and that they should not be using the Council's systems for accessing the web for any purpose other than browsing.
- (j) That all members, and in particular Portfolio Holders, Committee and Review Panel Chairmen and the political group leaders, be encouraged to use the Calendar facility.

157. COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES (REPORT O).

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Corporate and Finance Review Panel following a review of the Council's appointments to outside bodies. It was reported that further work by the officers had revealed that appointments to five other organisations, in addition to those recommended by the Panel, were no longer required.

RECOMMENDED:

That the arrangements for making appointments to outside bodies and guidelines for reporting back on the work of outside bodies be deferred for consideration by the new Council after the election.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That appointments to the following outside bodies cease:

Community Action Hampshire
Dibden Bay Steering Group
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Marine Safety Committee
Health for All Core Group
King George V Memorial Fund Management Committee
Lymington Harbour Commissioners
Marchwood Junior School Management Committee for Community Use
Metropolitan Consortium
Milford and Pennington United Charities
New Forest District Forum
New Forest East and West Sports Councils
New Milton Youth Centre Management Committee

Poole, Bournemouth, Christchurch and District Post Office Advisory Committee
South East Regional Cultural Consortium
Southampton and South West Hampshire Health Improvement Board
Southern Arts Board
Sweatfords Water Working Group
Working Group on Runway Capacity to Serve the South East

- (ii) That appointments to the following Community Associations cease:

Fawley and District Community Association
Hythe and Dibden Community Association
Lyndhurst and District Community Association
Totton and Eling Community Association

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CB020403/MINUTES.DOC)