

**6 AUGUST 2003**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 August 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 M H Thierry
- p C A Wise

**In Attendance:**

**Councillors:**

- K F Ault
- C Baker
- Miss P A Drake
- R J Neath

**Councillors:**

- B M F Pemberton
- Mrs M J Robinson
- D N Scott
- P R Woods

**Also In Attendance:**

Mrs P White, Tenants' Representative

**Officers Attending:**

D Yates, C Malyon, Mrs L Battersby, J Mascal, R Millard, Miss G O'Rourke, J Ward and, for part of the meeting, Ms H Renwick, G Spawton and S Trueick

**27. MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2003, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

No declarations of interest were made by any members on any agenda items.

**29. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**30. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY (REPORT A).**

The Cabinet considered the updated Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy for 2003/2004. The Council had received a good assessment from GOSE for their 2002/2003 plan and strategy and it was therefore not necessary to submit another full strategy and plan this year. There was however a duty to prepare them.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the basis for allocation of resources through the single capital pot for 2004/05 be noted;***
- (b) *That the Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy for 2003 be agreed; and***
- (c) *That the performance indicators included within the Asset Management Plan for submission to GOSE be approved.***

**31. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (REPORT B).**

The Cabinet considered a proposed homelessness strategy, prepared as required under the Homelessness Act 2002.

Officers were congratulated on the review of homelessness that provided the context to the strategy, and on their development of proposed solutions.

It had to be recognised that there would be difficulties to overcome in securing capital finance and identifying suitable building land to enable more affordable homes to be provided. However, one of the four major objectives of the Heart of the Forest was to tackle the shortage of affordable housing in the District, and the Council was committed to finding resources to achieve this objective. Officers, members and partners would be considering how the action plan could best be delivered, and bids would be made through the expenditure planning process for funds to achieve particular aims identified in the strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

That the homelessness strategy as attached at Appendix One to report B be adopted.

**32. INSURANCE PREMIUMS (REPORT C).**

The Cabinet considered the detailed results of a tendering exercise and a request for additional funding to meet the costs of increased premiums. The very limited number of companies willing to tender for the business and the considerable increase in premiums being demanded meant that the original budget had proved insufficient.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That supplementary estimates of £68,000 (general fund) and £41,000 (housing revenue account) be approved in 2003/2004 to meet the increased insurance premiums.***

**33. DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (REPORT D).**

The Cabinet considered the detail of a request for additional funding necessary to cover the costs of taking the revised District Local Plan through public inquiry to adoption.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That a supplementary estimate of £80,000 in 2003/2004 be approved to cover the cost of taking the revised District Local Plan through public inquiry to adoption, and that any future costs be presented through the expenditure plans process.***

**34. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2003 TO JUNE 2003 (REPORT E).**

The Cabinet considered forecast budget variations from the approved original estimates for the full 2003/04 financial year.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the following supplementary estimates be approved:***

- ***£68,000 for additional insurance costs (see minute 32)***
- ***£30,000 in lieu of reduced road adoption income***
- ***£100,000 in lieu of reduced land charges income***
- ***£80,000 for local plan costs (see minute 33);***
- ***£154,000 for Housing Revenue Account variations as detailed in Report E;***

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the agreement of the above recommendations, the revised General Fund budget as set out in Appendix 1 to Report E; the revised capital expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 to Report E; and the revised Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendix 3 to Report E, be approved.

**35. FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2004/07 (REPORT F).**

The Cabinet considered a proposed financial strategy that was intended to provide a clear framework for members to consider future expenditure plan and budget proposals. The proposed strategy had been set against the context of the four key priorities in the Heart of the Forest.

The draft general fund forecast at Appendix 1 to the report was purely indicative and should not be regarded as a forecast of likely Council Tax levels in future years.

Forthcoming changes at both local and national level were expected to affect the strategy, and the Council would need to consider these when their effect became known. Examples were proposals to change Council Tax discounts for second homes, proposed abolition of current controls on local authority borrowing and replacement by a Prudential Code, proposals in the Rural White Paper seeking to give Parish and Town Councils improved roles in quality of life issues, and a new budget consultation process being undertaken by Hampshire County Council using focus groups. Reports on these issues would be brought to members once further details were known.

Low interest rates meant that investment income was very low at present, although there was a possibility that this situation would improve towards the end of the financial year. However the budget placed little emphasis on investment income.

It was agreed that it would be advisable to await until the conclusion of the County Council consultation process before evaluating the most appropriate way forward in terms of consultation for this Council.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That the Financial Strategy as detailed in paragraph 9 of Report F be approved;**
- (b) That the timetable for the expenditure planning and budget setting process as detailed in paragraph 10 of Report F be approved;**
- (c) That an evaluation of the way forward in terms of consultation be taken after the completion of the process currently being undertaken by the County Council;**

- (d) *That the principle of the additional income raised by the reduction in the discount for second homes being allocated to the Local Strategic Partnership in order to tackle some of the priorities that are highlighted within the Community Strategy be approved; and*
- (e) *That the majority of the £1m rates refund be held in reserves until such time as the details of the Prudential Code have been evaluated and a strategic view of the way forward established.*

**36. RECREATION CENTRE MEMBERSHIP SALES – A PARTNERSHIP OPTION (REPORT G).**

The Cabinet considered the detail of an approach by two companies with proposals to market the benefits of a range of membership packages at Recreation Centres.

Members recognised the value of the Council's Recreation Centres to the general community. It was important that these high quality facilities, which were available to all sections of the community at affordable prices, were properly marketed. Attracting new customers would benefit both those individuals and the community as a whole, and provide a return on the investment the Council had made in the Centres in recent years.

**RESOLVED:**

That the proposal to use two companies, on a pilot basis, at Applemore and Totton Recreation Centres to market the benefits of a range of membership packages to potential users of local authority leisure centres be agreed, with a view to the most successful company being awarded a contract for the other three Recreation Centres.

**37. PROJECT INTEGRA BUSINESS PLAN 2003/2004 (REPORT H).**

The Cabinet considered the Project Integra Annual Business Plan for 2003/2004. The Plan included the proposed method of funding of the Project Integra Executive and Waste Management Projects. A change to the method of funding, which provided for an increased membership fee but permitted member authorities to retain their share of income from the sale of recyclables from the materials recycling facility, was welcomed as it would advantage those authorities that recycled the most.

**RECOMMENDED:**

*That the Project Integra Annual Business Plan 2003/2004 be agreed.*

**38. LITTER CLEARANCE ALONG DUAL CARRIAGEWAY TRUNK ROADS (REPORT I).**

The Cabinet considered a request for additional funding for the clearance of litter from dual carriageways and trunk roads. New health and safety legislation required additional precautions to be introduced when undertaking this type of litter clearance. The precautions added considerably to the cost but provided a much greater degree of safety to the litter picking staff.

**RECOMMENDED:**

*That a supplementary estimate of £27,000 in 2003/2004 be approved to clear litter from the dual carriageways and trunk roads in the New Forest and that specific budgetary provision be made in the Council's expenditure plan for 2004/05 and future years.*

**39. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME AND CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN (REPORT J).**

The Cabinet received an update on the Race Equality Scheme action plan and considered integrating it into the Corporate Equality Plan. This would ensure the Council had the mechanisms in place to satisfy legal requirements on equality, could easily comply with them, and could effectively monitor and publicise compliance.

The Council had long been committed to policies that avoided discrimination and promoted equality in both access to services and employment. It would continue to seek ways in which further improvements in this field, and in the level of awareness of the Council's policies and achievements, could be made.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Equality Standard and the integration of the Race Equality Scheme in the Equality Standard Action Plan (to be known as the Corporate Equality Plan) be agreed; and
- (b) That the action plan as detailed in Appendix 2 to Report J be agreed as the means of achieving at least Level 1 of the Equality Standard.

**40. NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN FIRST ALTERATION – PROPOSALS FOR REGENERATION OF CALSHOT (REPORT K).**

The Cabinet considered a report from the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder seeking confirmation of the Council's commitment to the Local Plan proposals for the regeneration of Calshot village.

The proposals were considered to be the best mechanism for attracting sufficient investment to increase the population of Calshot to a sustainable level, to make

physical improvements to the area, and to provide the facilities local residents required. Delivery of the proposals would require commitment, substantial investment, and close working with service providers. The first stage of the process would be to defend the Council's position at the Local Plan Inquiry.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to present evidence at the Public Local Inquiry into the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration in support of the Council's policies for Calshot;
- (b) That commitment to the regeneration of Calshot village, including the improvement of local facilities and infrastructure in partnership with local residents, be confirmed; and
- (c) That the policies of the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration as a means of achieving and securing funding for this regeneration continue to be supported.

**41. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (REPORT L).**

The Cabinet considered the proposed draft final self assessment prepared following the CPA Peer Challenge report. The Council's own proposed assessment of its score under each of the 10 key themes, based on the views of officer and member workshops, was circulated at the meeting.

The final self assessment had been drafted in the light of comments received from the Peer Challenge Team that had visited the Council in June. Following members' consideration of the content of the final self assessment, the text would be converted into a published document and forwarded to the Audit Commission. Other complementary documents also had to be prepared and submitted, for example "diagnostics" on public spaces and housing. A team of four, appointed by the Commission, would visit the Council in week commencing 29 September, following a preliminary visit on 19 September. This team would be responsible for scoring the Council's performance as falling within one of five categories ranging from excellent to poor.

Overall, the experience with the Peer Challenge Team had been very positive. The Team had been impressed by what they had found, had confirmed known strengths, and had made constructive suggestions for ways in which improvements could be made. Work was already beginning to tackle areas for improvement. For example, service plans would further sharpen priorities.

**RESOLVED:**

That the draft final Self Assessment report (Report L), and the draft assessment of scores (Appendix 1 to these minutes) be supported.

CHAIRMAN

Attachment: Appendix 1 – Minute 41

## OUR ASSESSMENT OF SCORES

## APPENDIX 1

Theme	Score	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambition	3	<p>Strong framework to Corporate Plan based on quality of life and balance of economic, environmental and social well-being.</p> <p>Outward looking Council, strong inclusive partnerships within LSP and beyond.</p> <p>Good understanding of local needs.</p> <p>Ambition to build on excellent track record of delivery to be among the best.</p>	<p>Tension between ambition and availability of finance.</p> <p>Scope to do more to build cohesive communities.</p> <p>Need to communicate ambitions better internally and externally.</p> <p>Need to develop shared vision and finalise Community Strategy.</p>
Prioritisation	3	<p>Priorities now made explicit.</p> <p>Priorities based on great deal of stakeholder involvement and understanding of local need. Close fit to national priorities.</p> <p>Good examples of delivery on important issues.</p>	<p>Need to improve communication of priorities.</p> <p>Scope to make priorities more SMART.</p> <p>Some scope to increase face to face stakeholder involvement including hard to reach groups.</p>
Focus	3	<p>Strong and improving focus through Cabinet, CMT and Heads of Service.</p> <p>Good management of Executive business.</p> <p>Good examples of policy into practice.</p>	<p>Need to review democratic structures to ensure all Members are engaged.</p>
Capacity	4	<p>Very capable and committed workforce. Empowered, energetic, enthusiastic managers.</p> <p>Strong financial management.</p> <p>Very good ICT and E-government progress.</p> <p>Good industrial relations.</p> <p>Excellent culture of working relationships.</p> <p>Very good existing and developing partnership networks.</p>	<p>Need to develop full potential of scrutiny.</p> <p>Could do more on diversity and workforce flexibility.</p>



Performance Management	3	<p>New system developed in response to identified weakness.</p> <p>Strong, honest approach to Best Value, including first class Performance Plan.</p>	<p>Need to fully implement new system.</p> <p>Lack of comprehensive approach to risk management.</p>
Achievement on Quality of Service	4	<p>Outstanding customer satisfaction ratings.</p> <p>Service quality on performance profile very good indeed, including BVPI's.</p> <p>High level achievement in priority areas.</p> <p>Innovative approaches eg Test Valley Partnership.</p>	<p>Further potential for rigorous use of performance information to shape service delivery.</p>
Achievement of Improvement.	3	<p>Many good examples of innovation, some of national significance.</p> <p>Good examples of impact on real lives.</p> <p>Created great potential for better joint working through LSP work.</p> <p>Employees signed up to continuous improvement.</p> <p>General trend of improving relationships.</p>	<p>Possibility of complacency over speed of change.</p> <p>Scope for further action on social cohesion.</p>
Investment	3	<p>Effective and well established building blocks, including financial management, committed workforce and partnership networks.</p> <p>Good response to internal and external challenge.</p> <p>Some good examples of attraction of external finance.</p> <p>Good investment in national priorities.</p>	<p>Scope to improve medium term financial strategy to tie in with strategic and workforce planning.</p> <p>Scope for greater attraction of external finance and better use/disposal of existing assets.</p>

Learning	3	<p>Very open authority, receptive and responsive to feedback.</p> <p>Very good participation in wider networks including process benchmarking with the private sector.</p> <p>Culture of empowerment, creativity and managed risk taking.</p> <p>Extensive use of learning techniques.</p>	<p>Scope for more systematic approach to learning and development.</p>
Future Plans	3	<p>Strong range of robust, well written plans within clear framework.</p> <p>Strong focus on improvement and commitment to improvement plans.</p> <p>Work on Community Strategy providing strong foundation for future joint planning.</p>	<p>Need to complete strategy framework.</p> <p>Need for more robust planning at a locality level.</p>