

6 APRIL 2005

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 April 2005.

p Cllr M J Kendal (Chairman)  
p Cllr B Rickman (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

p G C Beck  
e P C Greenfield  
p J D Heron

**Councillors:**

p Mrs M D Holding  
p M H Thierry  
p C A Wise

**In Attendance:**

**Councillors:**

G Dart  
F R Harrison  
J M Hoy  
Mrs B Maynard  
R J Neath  
G J Parkes  
L R Puttock

**Councillors:**

Mrs M J Robinson  
D N Scott  
Mrs S I Snowden  
Mrs B Vincent  
S S Wade  
J Ward  
P R Woods

**Also In Attendance:**

Mrs P White and Mrs A Murphy, Tenants' Representatives.

**Officers Attending:**

D Yates, N Gibbs, C Malyon, J Mascall, Ms J Bateman and Miss G O'Rourke and, for part of the meeting, G Ashworth, Ms A Hall, G Prentice, Mrs J Garity, J Ward and D Wright.

**131. MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2005, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**132. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Cllr Kendal declared an interest in Minute Nos. 134 & 139

Cllrs Heron, Rickman and SS Wade declared interests in Minute No. 139

Cllr FR Harrison declared an interest in Minute No. 140

**133. DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION (REPORT A).**

The Cabinet considered the draft South East Plan, as published for consultation by the South East England Regional Assembly together with a proposed response.

Members noted a revised and extended timetable for the work.

The eastern part of New Forest District was in the defined South Hampshire sub-region. Most of the District was included in “central Hampshire and the New Forest”. It was noted that a house building rate of 1,000 p.a in central Hampshire and the New Forest had been recommended by a meeting of relevant Council Leaders (or their substitutes). This tied in with “sharper focus” options in the draft S E Plan that proposed a decrease in the rate of development outside the defined sub regions but a corresponding increase in the rate of development in the defined sub-regions.

In terms of the Strategy for South Hampshire the Cabinet noted the proposed response from PUSH and was advised that this would be considered at a Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) meeting later in the day. Members agreed there could be tensions developing between the Council’s stance and the higher growth levels proposed in recent work by DTZ consultants commissioned by PUSH.

The Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder said that overall he was satisfied with the Council’s response to the consultation document but would continue to evaluate the position as matters developed.

**RESOLVED:**

That the comments on the draft South East Plan as set out in Report A to the Cabinet and below be submitted to SEERA as this Council’s comments on the draft South East Plan :

- (a) That the comments on the proposals for “Rest of Hampshire” and spatial options as detailed in paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12 be agreed;
- (b) That the comments on the proposals on the Regional Policy Framework (including affordable housing) as detailed in paragraph 3.14 be agreed;
- (c) That the Minerals and Waste policies as detailed in paragraph 3.15 be agreed;
- (d) That the comments on the New Forest National Park in paragraph 3.18 be agreed; and

- (e) That the Strategy for South Hampshire as detailed in paragraphs 3.24 to 3.25 be agreed.

**134. MILFORD ON SEA – SEAFRONT PHASE B (REPORT B).**

Cllr Kendal declared a personal interest as a local member. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion but abstained from voting.

In March 2004 the Cabinet agreed arrangements and funding for Phase A of the Seafront refurbishment. Members now considered proposals for a phase B of the project to complete the scheme.

Milford Parish Council had indicated that they wished to take over and maintain the proposed Under 5's play area and Members agreed that this needed to be formally recognised.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) ***That the proposals for Phase B of the scheme to renovate Milford Seafront as detailed in Report B to the Cabinet be approved;***
- (b) ***That the process for funding Phase B be approved;***
- (c) ***That the provision of the under five's play area be subject to a formal Agreement with Milford Parish Council, which secures their interest in the long term tenure of the land and commitment to maintenance of the area; and***
- (d) ***That the project management arrangements remain in place for the duration of the project and are used on an "as required" basis.***

**135. CRITICAL ORDINARY WATER COURSES (REPORT C).**

All Critical Ordinary Watercourses (COWS) in England and Wales were being re-classified as main rivers. Powers to deal with them were being transferred to the Environment Agency as part of a Government initiative to improve watercourse maintenance and reduce flood risk.

The Cabinet considered an offer from the Southern region of the Environment Agency which would give the Council the opportunity to contract back maintenance of newly enmained COWS for a period of two years starting 2006. In addition members also considered the possibility of NFDC forming a partnership with Eastleigh Borough Council to carry out contracted back watercourse maintenance in their area, subject to a sound business case.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That, subject to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services being satisfied as to its content and subject to the Environment Portfolio Holder and the Director of Commercial Services, in consultation with the Director of Resources, being satisfied as to the outcome of final negotiations, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Southern Region of the Environment Agency be agreed to enable for the Council to undertake maintenance work on new main rivers for a period of two years, from April 2006 to March 2008; and
- (b) That, provided that the Environment Agency approves the arrangement and subject to the Environment Portfolio Holder and the Director of Commercial Services being satisfied that a sound business case exists for doing so and to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services being satisfied as to the content of any partnering agreement, the formation of a partnering arrangement with Eastleigh Borough Council to carry out maintenance work on new main rivers within Eastleigh be approved.

**136. COUNCIL'S KEY TARGETS (REPORT D).**

The Cabinet has considered the assessment of achievement against key targets set for 2004/05 and agreed key targets for the Council for 2005/06.

Members noted that the Key Targets were deliberately broad to cover the Council's main aims. Efforts had been made to make the targets as 'smart' and as measurable as possible.

The Environment Portfolio Holder reported that, for the New Forest, the Government recycling target had been reduced from 40% to 30% (Environment Key Achievement 2004/05 - no. 2 refers).

In response to a question, the Health and Social Inclusion Portfolio Holder said that the work with the New Forest PCT on the introduction of a New Forest Learning Action Zone (Health & Social Inclusion Key Achievement 2004/05 – no. 5 refers) was continuing even though it was not specifically targeted for 2005/06.

Members noted that the Policy and Strategy Key Target no's 4 & 5 required further work to confirm the appropriate percentage level of achievement. These would be agreed by the Portfolio Holder before final publication.

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to final amendment by the Portfolio Holder as detailed, the assessment of performance against the 2004/05 key targets and the 2005/06 key targets for inclusion in the Council's Performance Plan be agreed.

**137. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2004 TO FEBRUARY 2005 (REPORT E).**

The Cabinet considered the forecast budget variations of all portfolios and committees from the approved original estimates for 2004/05.

Members noted that the new proactive financial reporting arrangements were working well and information on the Council's financial position was much more transparent. There was currently a substantial underspend on budgets for 2004/05 and this would need to be built into expenditure plans where possible for 2006/07. In particular there was a high level of underspend on housing environmental enhancements which members noted was due to delays in obtaining agreements with tenants on project designs. All ongoing projects would however be completed.

In relation to the Leisure portfolio it was noted that the purchase of additional golf buggies at Dibden Golf Centre, in the current financial year, would not be possible. Therefore the £12,000 funding would be transferred to reserves to enable the purchase in 2005/06.

Cllr Robinson welcomed the greater transparency from the revised reporting arrangements, but expressed concern at the high level of revenue underspend and the amount of slippage in the capital budget. She felt that better work could be done in scrutinising the financial process.

The Chairman said that the amount of slippage in the capital budget was due to a number of different projects each contributing a small amount, rather than major difficulties with one large project.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder said that he was very pleased with the way in which the financial reporting system had developed. As the system became more refined the Council would gain a better control of its expenditure and knowledge of income.

**RECOMMENDED:****(a) That the following supplementary estimates be approved:**

- **£43,000 for increased Catering costs / income shortfalls**
- **£21,000 for increased CCTV costs**
- **£183,000 due to increased Health and Leisure Centre costs/shortfall in income**
- **£25,000 in respect of Beach Hut income**

**(b) That a virement of £57,000 from Revenue Contributions to Major Repairs to the Disabled Facilities Grant budget be approved.****RESOLVED:**

- (a) That, subject to the Dibden Golf Centre Golf Buggies being funded by a contribution to reserves rather than being purchased in 2004/05, the items set out in the revised General Fund budget in Appendix 1 of Report E to the Cabinet be approved;

- (b) That the revised capital expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 of Report E to the Cabinet be approved;
- (c) That the revised Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendix 3 to Report E to the Cabinet be approved;
- (d) That the financial position of Commercial Services as set out in Appendix 4 to Report E to the Cabinet be approved; and
- (e) That the actual expenditure to profiled budget positions of the General Fund, Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendices 1 to 3 of Report E to the Cabinet be approved.

**138. PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK FOR 2005/06 (REPORT F).**

The Cabinet considered the Planned Maintenance Improvement Programme for 2005/2006 and the implications of the proposed increase in the Cyclical Maintenance Budget and equivalent decrease in the Planned Maintenance budget.

Mrs White, Tenants' representative said that whilst the tenants were still disappointed at the lack of budgetary provision for environmental enhancements, they were however very appreciative of the work that the Council did and had no doubt that officers would strive to maintain the current high standard of service delivery.

Members agreed that officers should investigate any external sources of funding that might be available to carry out environmental enhancement work on the Council's housing estates.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the cyclical maintenance budget be increased by £188,000 to £1,197,000 with a corresponding decrease in the Planned Maintenance Programme to £4,562,000; and*
- (b) *That the schemes listed in Appendix I be approved as the planned maintenance and improvements programme and cyclical maintenance programme for 2005/2006.*

**139. DELIVERY OF PLANNING SERVICES IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AND THE REMAINING NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA (REPORT G).**

Cllrs Kendal declared a personal interest as a County Council appointed member of the New Forest National Park. Cllrs Heron, Rickman and S S Wade all declared personal interests as District Council appointed members of the New Forest National Park.

None of the members considered their interests to be prejudicial. They all remained at the meeting and voted. (Cllr S S Wade did not have a vote).

The Cabinet considered options for the provision of planning services when the New Forest National Park took up its functions. The Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Review Panel had met earlier that day and had supported the recommendation before the Cabinet.

Members noted that the option to pursue a partnership approach to the provision of planning services was the start of a process of negotiation that would consider the interests of the Council as a whole, together with the wider interests of all the parties concerned.

Mrs White, tenant representative, said that she was concerned at the effect the National Park would have on the New Forest in terms of affordable housing. Efforts needed to be made to encourage young people to stay within the area. Members noted that against the background of the previous New Forest Heritage area and the work that the Planning Development Control Committee had already done, the establishment of the National Park should not have a detrimental effect on the provision of affordable housing.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder said that it was important to acknowledge the element of risk that both the Council and National Park authority would be open to. There would now be two bodies, close geographically, and therefore in competition for professional staff. The Council already experienced difficulties in recruiting professional planning staff and this could only exacerbate the situation. Co-operation would be very important to both parties.

**RESOLVED:**

That New Forest District Council request the New Forest National Park Authority to enter into detailed discussions about a partnership approach to the provision of planning services with each authority sharing a joint team of planning officers and support staff.

**140. PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON PROCEDURE (REPORT H).**

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

The Cabinet reviewed the procedure for liaison with town and parish councils initiated with part of the planning delivery grant for 2004/05.

Members noted that the procedure had been very successful and had resulted in a high level of satisfaction from local councils. As a result the amount of items considered by the Planning Development Control Committee had also reduced.

Members agreed that it would be useful for Planning Development Control Committee members to receive the same background information on planning applications that was now given to local councils. Officers agreed to look at the best way of providing this using electronic means where possible.

**RESOLVED:**

That the continuation of the liaison procedure as amended, be agreed, and it be noted that the procedure will subsequently be the subject of a future annual review, reported to the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder.

**141. MEALS ON WHEELS – MEAL PRICE 2005/06 (REPORT I).**

Hampshire County Council has set the 2005/06 'county price' for Meals on Wheels at £2.70 with effect from 5 April 2005. The Cabinet considered a proposal to increase the district Meals on Wheels price by 10p to match this. This increase had already been included in the Council's 2005/06 agreed budget.

**RESOLVED:**

That the New Forest Meals On Wheels price be set at £2.70 for 2005/2006.

CHAIRMAN