

4 MAY 2005

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 4 May 2005

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

Councillors:

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

Councillors:

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

In Attendance:

Councillors:

R J Neath
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
J Penwarden
L R Puttock

Councillors:

Mrs M J Robinson
Mrs S I Snowden
J G Ward
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

Mrs A Murphy, Tenants' Representative.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, C Malyon, Ms J Bateman, D Brown, Miss G O'Rourke and Ms S Plumridge.

142. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2005, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

143. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Heron, Kendal, Neath and Rickman all declared interests in minute 145.

144. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

145. RURAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (REPORT A).

Cllr Neath declared a personal interest in this item as a member of the New Forest Villages Housing Association. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion. He did not have a vote.

Cllr Kendal declared personal interests in this item as a member of Hampshire County Council and as a member of the New Forest National Park Authority. He did not consider either interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

Cllrs Heron and Rickman declared personal interests in this item as members of the New Forest National Park Authority. They did not consider their interests to be prejudicial. They remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

Mrs Sally Owen, Parish Councillor for Bransgore addressed the Cabinet.

Mrs Owen commented on a number of specific housing issues in Bransgore. She expressed concern that although a site had been put forward in Bransgore for affordable housing, she understood that the housing association had withdrawn. The site was within the National Park and she said that the Council felt the proposed development was too large. The Housing Association involved was not one of the Council's preferred associations. Local people in the parish were in favour of affordable housing. The Parish Council had seen plans for the site and had voted overwhelmingly in favour of the development. In September 2004 there were 49 people on the housing register with connections with Bransgore.

Mrs Owen questioned why the district council had to have a preferred list of housing associations. She felt that if a housing association was willing to part fund and take forward a project then it should be encouraged

Mr George Dibben, Chairman of the New Forest Villages Housing Association (NFVHA) addressed the Cabinet.

Mr Dibben said that the NFVHA had participated in the development of the proposed Rural Housing Strategy and agreed with the identified need of 100 homes per year. However, the association did not agree with the strategy to build only 10 homes per year. Whilst it was understood that the limited proposal was to take account of insufficient sites coming forward for development and limited grant funding, NFVHA felt that neither of these factors would change without intervention from the Council. More consideration should have been given to planning initiatives to produce a solution to the shortfall of 90 homes per year.

NFVHA were of the view that where land was being developed in a village, part of the development should be for sale on the open market. As long as there remained a demonstrable need for affordable homes for local needs in villages then the shortfall in funding and land availability could be addressed.

Members discussed the proposed strategy in detail. It was important to ensure that suitable affordable housing was provided. There were implications for design as well as the siting of housing and there was some concern that PPG3 (Planning Policy Guidance) would enable development outside of villages where there were no facilities or social infrastructure. It was also important to try and address the specific housing needs of Commoners.

The Housing Portfolio Holder said that since the withdrawal of social housing grant, the Council were now competing for funds. The New Forest was seen as an affluent area and the Council were not at the top of the Regional Housing Board's priority list. It was now very difficult to obtain adequate funding and each application to the Regional Housing Board had to be fully justified.

In response to some of the points raised by Mrs Owen, the Housing Portfolio Holder said that he did not accept there was a particular problem in Bransgore. There was a definite housing need across the whole district. However, a meeting was to be held with Signpost Housing Association to see what could be achieved using the planning Rural Exceptions Policy.

In response to some of the issues raised by Mr Dibben, the Housing Portfolio Holder said that the Council were continuing to look at implementing a local connections policy and were using planning initiatives to address the problems. Under the Rural Exceptions Policy individuals were only able to rent or purchase a part of a property and therefore the property remained in the affordable housing stream. The Portfolio Holder did not accept that opening the system up to market forces was best policy, as eventually property would leave the affordable housing stream.

Affordable housing was one of the Council's corporate priorities. The Rural Housing Strategy was only one aspect of the Council's overall housing and planning policies that all aimed to increase affordable housing in the district.

In supporting the Strategy Cllr Robinson said that it was more important to ensure that a development site was appropriate to demonstrable need rather than location. The National Park boundary should not necessarily be a factor in the decision.

The Housing Portfolio Holder said that he intended to discuss the Rural Housing Strategy with the National Park Authority and hoped to move forward with their agreement.

Members also agreed that there was a need to consider the future use and control of agricultural dwellings and the needs of people wishing to build property on land that they owned.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Rural Housing Development Strategy and the Action Plan as detailed in Report A to the Cabinet be adopted with any subsequent detailed changes being agreed by officers in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder.

**146. DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE CATERING OPERATING DEFICIT –
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (REPORT B).**

The Cabinet considered a supplementary estimate of £31,650 for 2005/06 for Dibden Golf Centre catering to cover an operating deficit for the forthcoming year.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary estimate of £31,650 for 2005/06 be agreed for Dibden Golf Centre catering.

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CB040505/MINUTES.DOC)