

5 OCTOBER 2005

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 5 October 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:

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

In Attendance:

Councillors:

- R J Neath
- L R Puttock
- Mrs M J Robinson
- D N Scott

Councillors:

- Mrs S I Snowden
- C R Treleaven
- P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

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

Officers Attending:

C Malyon, J Mascall, Mrs L Battersby, G Bettle, Mrs M Dunsmore, C Elliott, Miss G O'Rourke and, for part of the meeting, G Ashworth and S Trueick.

45. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2005, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

- Cllr Kendal – Minute 49
- Cllr Mrs Robinson – Minute 53

47. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

48. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – REPORT ON REPRESENTATIONS PRIOR TO SUBMISSION (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered a draft Statement of Community Involvement, a document the Council was required to prepare as part of the new Local Development Framework (LDF). The Statement set out how the Council would involve people and organisations in preparing its LDF, and when dealing with planning applications.

Members were advised that at its meeting on 20 September 2005 the New Forest National Park Authority had resolved to support the Statement of Community Involvement in principle.

As the Statement needed to be approved by full Council on 24 October 2005, it was now proposed that the further 6 week consultation period run from 28 October to 9 December 2005.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the excellent response to consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement at both pre-production, and production draft stages be noted;***
- (b) *That the responses made by officers to representations received as set out in Annex 1 to Report A and the revisions to the SCI documents be endorsed;***
- (c) *That the documents in Annexes 1 to 8 to Report A be submitted to the Secretary of State for his approval, and publicised for a further 6-week consultation period commencing on 28 October 2005; and***
- (d) *That the Head of Policy, Design & Information be authorised to make any necessary detailed editing or clarification changes.***

49. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT “WHERE SHALL WE LIVE” – DISTRICT HOUSEBUILDING TARGETS FOR SOUTH EAST PLAN (REPORT B).

Cllr Kendal declared a personal interest as a member of Hampshire County Council. His interest was not prejudicial and he remained in the meeting.

The Cabinet considered its response to a consultation paper prepared by the County Council and the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). Following the consultation, the County Council and PUSH aimed to advise the South East England Regional Assembly of District housing targets to be included in the complete draft South East plan.

A letter from Ringwood Town Council was circulated at the meeting and their comments were noted.

Members were disappointed that two of the three options for the South Hampshire area proposed significant new urban extension on greenfield sites in the narrow strip of Totton and the Waterside east of the National Park. The Council had previously made the point that the transport infrastructure in particular was inadequate for significant development over and above that already agreed for this area.

RESOLVED:

That Hampshire County Council and PUSH be advised that this Council:

- (i) Supports the principles that:
 - (a) Further development should only take place where adequate infrastructure and services are ensured hand-in-hand with the development;
 - (b) Development in South Hampshire should be focussed on urban regeneration and renaissance of the two cities and other main urban areas;
 - (c) The major part of any new greenfield development should be concentrated in new Strategic Development Areas, provided with the necessary infrastructure and services;
- (ii) Considers that further work needs to be done with regard to the scope for development in the main urban areas over the whole plan period, with a view to reducing the amount of development that needs to be provided for through greenfield urban extensions;
- (iii) Considers that it is absolutely vital that there is a proper and full Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of the options before any decision is taken. This must take into account in particular the impact of development proposals on the New Forest National Park, in accordance with the requirements of the 1995 Environment Act and the 2005 guidance published by Defra. It must also take account of the accepted constraints in New Forest District outside the National Park;
- (iv) Would only support Option 3 for the "South Hampshire area", and objects strongly to Options 1 and 2 on the basis that these options would require unsustainable major new greenfield development in the Totton and Waterside area, and that this would be likely to have an unacceptable impact on the adjacent New Forest National Park and also on the area outside the National Park if proper account is taken of local designations and constraints; and
- (v) Has no strong preference between the options for the "Central Hampshire and New Forest area".

50. PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2005/06 (REPORT C).

The Cabinet noted that the amount received from the Government by way of Planning Delivery Grant for 2005/06 was £618,000. This was £96,000 more than the amount it had been assumed would be received when preparing the budget for the current year. Authority was now sought to spend the extra amount on improving planning services.

Members were advised that the extra grant received was currently being used to enhance the service to Parish and Town Councils, both by providing them with more information on planning applications so they were able to make informed comments to the District Council, reducing the number of applications that had to be referred to the Planning Development Control Committee, and for the employment of an officer to assist with Parish Plans. Both these services were much valued by Town and Parish Councils and within communities generally. The amount of grant the Council would receive in 2006/07 was not known as the criteria for awards had not yet been set, and it was understood that the grant scheme itself would be reviewed as part of the Government spending review so there was no guarantee it would continue beyond the next financial year. When the amount of annual grant reduced, or ceased altogether, difficult decisions would need to be made on whether the services funded by the grant could continue to be provided by the Council. When the budgetary implications of the National Park Authority taking over responsibility for development control from April 2006 had become clear, this issue would need to be considered in the context of the Council's overall expenditure plans.

RECOMMENDED:

That additional expenditure of £96,000 in 2005/06 for improvement of planning services, to be funded from the receipt of additional Planning Delivery Grant, be approved.

51. LAND CHARGES – UNDERACHIEVEMENT OF BUDGETED INCOME (REPORT D).

The Cabinet noted that a net budget shortfall of £220,000 was predicted for land charges income in 2005/06. The main reasons were a significant slow down in the local property market, growth of personal searches at a fixed fee of £11 set by the Lord Chancellor, and an increase in solicitors using companies specialising in providing a search service. The three full time employees in land charges were the minimum that could be employed if the Council was to continue providing a service in line with its target of achieving a 99.9% turn round in 10 working days.

Despite the predicted shortfall, almost £600,000 income was expected from land charges in the current year.

The Council's land charges service was of a very high quality. It appeared that many large firms of solicitors who had business over a wide area decided in principle to use an outside company rather than deal with numerous District Councils, some of whom may not provide a good service. Officers were taking what steps they could to maximise income from land charges searches, including encouraging local solicitors to use the Council's service rather than outside companies. However, the reduction in income was largely beyond the Council's control and an improvement in current levels could not be expected.

RECOMMENDED:

That a net supplementary estimate of £220,000 in relation to the predicted fall in land charges income be approved.

52. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL – AUGUST 2005 (REPORT E).

The Cabinet considered the forecast budget variations of all Portfolios and Committees from the approved original estimates for 2005/2006. Members were pleased to note a low variation between profiled and actual total revenue budgets for the year to date. An apparent major variation in the vehicles and equipment capital budget would be resolved when substantial invoices had been paid.

The financial position of Commercial Services was noted. This service had a total budget of about £5 million, with no contingency budget. A variety of pressures on the service, including rising plastic and fuel costs, increased volumes of fly tipping and litter, and increased employee costs due to sickness and the effects of single status, had made it difficult to contain costs within budgets.

Increases in serious incidents of fly tipping, often involving waste that appeared to be from commercial operations and required specialist machinery to clear up, were of particular concern. This was believed to be largely due to substantial increases in waste disposal charges. Steps were being taken to ascertain the potential of CCTV technology in areas where fly tipping was most prevalent. The co-operation of members of the public in reporting the registration numbers of perpetrators' vehicles would also be welcome.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That a supplementary estimate of £125,000 in respect of refuse collection/waste management be approved; and***
- (b) *That a virement of £62,000 from Major Repairs to the HRA Disabled Facilities budget be approved.***

RESOLVED:

- (c) That, subject to Council agreeing recommendation (a) above, the items set out in the revised General Fund budget in Appendix 1 to Report E be approved;
- (d) That the revised capital expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 to Report E be approved;
- (e) That, subject to Council agreeing recommendation (b) above, the revised Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendix 3 to Report E be approved;
- (f) That the financial position of Commercial Services as set out in Appendix 4 to Report E be noted; and
- (g) 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 to Report E be noted.

53. SOUTH WEST HAMPSHIRE LIFT (REPORT F).

Cllr Mrs Robinson declared a personal interest in view of her association with the Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust. Her interest was not prejudicial and she remained in the meeting.

The Cabinet considered whether to participate in the South West Hampshire NHS Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT). LIFT was a Government scheme designed to promote the efficient procurement of primary and community health care services through public/private partnerships, and was an alternative to the Private Finance Initiative. If the Council wished to participate it needed to confirm this before an advertisement was placed in the Official Journal of the European Union inviting expressions of interest from the private sector. This advertisement was due to be placed shortly.

Members noted the potential benefits of the scheme to local authorities, as set out in the report. However, while it appeared there may be no direct financial costs associated with membership, participating at level 1 meant the Council would be named as a contracting authority, and at level 2 the Council would be a participant under the Strategic Partnership Agreement. The benefits that might accrue to the Council from participation did not appear to be significant, and based on the level of information currently available, members felt unable to judge whether participation could lead to additional or opportunity costs. It was therefore considered that further information should be obtained, including, if available, the experiences of authorities that were involved in similar schemes in other areas, any potential financial risks or liabilities that could fall to the Council as a result of participation, and the ability of the Council to withdraw from the scheme should it wish to do so. If a decision needed to be made before the next Cabinet meeting, this could be taken by the relevant Portfolio Holders.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That officers be requested to make further enquiries about the LIFT Scheme, in particular the resource and financial implications that joining at level 1 or level 2 could potentially give rise to, and whether and on what terms the Council could withdraw from the scheme; and
- (b) That the Finance and Support Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Health and Social Inclusion Portfolio Holder, be authorized to decide whether the Council should join the scheme and if so, whether this should be at level 1 or level 2.

54. CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (REPORT G).

The Cabinet noted the decision of the Housing, Health and Social Inclusion Review Panel following the call in of a Cabinet decision relating to provision of meals on wheels in sheltered housing schemes, and a decision of the Corporate Overview Panel following the call in of a Cabinet decision relating to the Community Strategy Action Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

55. REPRESENTATION ON NEW FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LIAISON COMMITTEE.

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Mrs B Smith be appointed to the New Forest Environmental Protection Liaison Committee in place of Cllr Mrs M McLean.

56. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CABINET – 24 OCTOBER 2005.

RESOLVED:

That a special meeting of the Cabinet be held at 4.00 p.m on Monday 24 October 2005 to consider representations to the proposed amendments to the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order, for recommendation to Council later that day.

CHAIRMAN