

7 JUNE 2006

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 7 June 2006.

- 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
- p M H Thierry

In Attendance:

Councillors:

C Baker
Mrs J L Cleary
C J Harrison
D Harrison
F Harrison
Mrs M Humber
Mrs B M Maynard
R J Neath
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton

Councillors:

Mrs M J Robinson
D N Scott
Mrs S I Snowden
C R Treleaven
S S Wade
A Weeks
Dr M N Whitehead
P R Woods

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, D Brown, Ms D Dabrowska and C Elliott.

3. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 5 April and 15 May 2006, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Rickman declared a personal interest in Minute 13.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

6. THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL CONTROL (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered a report outlining the work carried out to investigate a partnership approach to the future delivery of the Council's Central Control service. Following an informal approach to other organisations the creation of an effective partnership had not been possible. Members noted that the only option available that would produce the necessary savings, whilst maintaining a quality service that could be afforded, would be externalisation.

The Employee side comments were reported. They said that they were disappointed with the proposal but understood the reasons for the recommendation. If the service was externalised then as well as ensuring that the high standard of service was maintained, every effort should be made to use the situation to gain improvements.

The Housing Portfolio Holder said that outsourcing of Central Control would only take place on the strict understanding that there would be no detrimental change to the service provided to residents. If as a result of outsourcing, additional funding was freed up, then that should be re-invested into the service to enable improvements.

The uncertainty surrounding the future of Central Control had meant that officers had delivered and were continuing to deliver an excellent service under difficult circumstances. The Cabinet thanked officers for this work and reiterated that the proposals were only necessary because of the need to address the economics surrounding the way in which the service was being provided.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That expressions of interest be invited from interested local control centre operators to provide the monitoring service for NFDC sheltered housing tenants, community alarm users and an out of hours emergency service for NFDC; and
- (b) That subject to satisfactory results of an investigation of those interested providers that they are able to provide a quality monitoring service to the standards required by NFDC, a formal tender process be undertaken to select a new external provider of these services with a view to commence on 1st April 2007.

7. THE SOUTH EAST PLAN (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered a response to a consultation on the South East Plan. In general, the Plan as it related to the New Forest district set out an acceptable basis for the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework.

Members discussed in detail the issues arising from the consultation. In particular they considered the proposed housing requirement for the New Forest District, including the National Park. The requirement in the Plan was for 207 dwellings a year amounting to 4,138 dwellings for the period 2006/2026. The proposed breakdown of the District's overall housing requirement was 1,538 dwellings in Totton/Waterside with the remaining 2,600 in the rest of the district. Members agreed that these targets should be treated as an indicative distribution rather than as a separate regional policy requirement for each part of the District.

Members expressed concern over housing densities generally. In particular, they felt that insufficient weight was given to the differences between urban and rural areas and that the need for local variations in densities according to local circumstances should be emphasised, rather than regional targets. The Cabinet felt that whilst there were problems with local infrastructures such as public transport arrangements and increasing demands on water supplies that were not keeping pace with new developments, there was also the issue of quality of life for people in areas of over development or inappropriate development. It was agreed that officers would make particular reference to these concerns in the formal response to the South East Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, in response to the consultation on the submitted South East Plan, New Forest District Council submits to the Examination Panel responses based on the points set out in Section 4 of Report B to the Cabinet and, in particular, emphasises the need for local variations in densities according to local circumstances rather than just following the regional target;
- (b) That, based on the response to the submitted South East Plan agreed by Cabinet, the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to agree appropriate joint responses from the PUSH group of authorities and from the Central Hampshire/New Forest group of authorities; and
- (c) That a joint Member Task Group be set up comprising a small number of Members from each of the Housing, Health & Social Inclusion and Economy & Planning Review Panels to consider, and to report back to Cabinet, on the issue of how the Council can best meet its affordable housing targets in the context of a reduced future new-build rate.

8. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (REPORT C).

As part of the new Local Development Framework, (LDF) that would eventually replace the Local Plan, the Council was required to produce a document called a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This document set out how the Council would involve people and organisations in preparing its LDF, and when dealing with planning applications.

Following detailed public consultation the Secretary of State appointed an Inspector to examine the soundness of the Council's SCI. In overall terms the Inspector concluded that the Council's Statement of Community Involvement was sound. The Inspector made a number of minor recommendations that mainly endorsed changes that had been proposed by the Council during the examination.

Having considered the report and the issues raised by the examination the Cabinet agreed that the Inspector's report was uncontentious and should be accepted and the Statement of Community Involvement adopted.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***That the Inspector's report as detailed in Annex 1 to Report C to the Cabinet be accepted; and***
- (b) ***That the Statement of Community Involvement, as amended by the Inspector, be adopted.***

9. PERFORMANCE MATTERS : PERFORMANCE PLAN 2006/07 (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered matters concerning the Council's 2006/07 Performance Plan, including proposed changes, arrangements for approval, and performance indicator schedules by Portfolio.

The Council had a legal obligation to publish a performance plan. Over the last few years the Plan had continued to develop and improve the way the Council reported their overall performance to the public and partners. The Performance Plan was an important part of the Council's Performance Management process and enabled members to challenge performance and drive the process of continuous improvement.

The "traffic light" system had been used to help identify areas of good or improving performance, and areas that warranted further examination. Members noted that a red light did not necessarily indicate poor performance, but areas that might need particular examination.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***That the proposals to continue the current format for the 2006/07 Performance Plan as set out in section 2.6 of Report D to the Cabinet be approved;***
- (b) ***That the proposed developments for the performance plan as set out in section 3 of Report D to the Cabinet be approved; and***
- (c) ***That it be noted that there were no changes arising from the discussion at the Cabinet meeting to be made to the proposed targets for the Council's Best Value and local set of Indicators.***

10. RINGWOOD TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT – STEERING GROUP (REPORT E).

The Cabinet considered the establishment of a members' steering group to consider the future use of land in the Council's ownership in the area of the Furlong Car Park in Ringwood Town Centre.

RESOLVED:

That a Steering Group, comprising the members listed below, be set up to consider options for the Council's land holding at the Furlong Car park, Ringwood covered by Local Plan Policy RW-2, and that a report be made back to the Cabinet in the Autumn:

Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr Ms L C Ford
Cllr P C Greenfield
Cllr J D Heron
Cllr M H Thierry
Cllr C R Treleven

11. CHANGES TO EXISTING DELEGATIONS AND NEW DELEGATIONS UNDER THE HOUSING ACT 2004 (REPORT F).

The Cabinet considered changes to the Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council be requested to appoint the Proper Officers as set out in Report F to the Cabinet as required by Sections 4 and 239 of the Housing Act 2004.

RESOLVED:

That the Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers be amended in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 as detailed in Report F to the Cabinet.

12. CHANGES TO EXISTING DELEGATIONS – COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE (REPORT G).

Following the secondment of the Head of Policy, Design and Information to the National Park Authority there has been a number of structural changes within the Community Services Directorate. As a result the Cabinet considered changes to the Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers to reflect the new structures in so far as they related to the Cabinet functions. In addition they considered recommendations on other aspects that were Council functions.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That all those powers within the control of the Council that are currently delegated to the Head of Policy Design and Information be delegated also to the Head of Planning and the Planning Policy Manager;*
- (b) *That all those powers within the control of the Council that are currently delegated to the Head of Development Control be now delegated to the Head of Planning and the Development Control Manager;*
- (c) *That all those powers within the control of the Council that are currently delegated to the Tree Team Leader and Conservation and Urban Design Team Leader be delegated to the Environmental Design Manager and the Assistant Director of Leisure Services (Services Development); and*
- (d) *That all other job titles be updated to reflect the new structure.*

RESOLVED:

- (a) That all those powers within the control of the Cabinet (Economy and Planning Portfolio) that are currently delegated to the Head of Policy Design and Information be delegated also to the Head of Planning and the Planning Policy Manager, except:

<p>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990</p>	<p>To offer historic building grants</p>	<p>Head of Policy Design and Information, or Assistant Director of Leisure Services (Services Development), or Environmental Design Manager</p>
<p>Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1890 s. 42</p>	<p>To enter into sponsorship agreements for the enhancement of roundabouts subject to no objections being received from the Police, County Council, Town or Parish Council and, in the National Park, the New Forest National Park Authority</p>	<p>Head of Policy Design and Information, or Head of Planning, or Principal Engineer (Transportation) in consultation with Environmental Design Manager</p>

Local Government (Misc Provisions) Act 1976 s 23 and 24	Dangerous Trees	Head of Policy Design and Information, or Assistant Director of Leisure Services (Services Development), or Environmental Design Manager, or Senior Arboriculturist
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- (b) That all those powers within the control of the Cabinet (Economy and Planning Portfolio) that are currently delegated to the Head of Development Control be now delegated to the Head of Planning and the Development Control Manager
- (c) That all those powers within the control of the Cabinet (Economy and Planning Portfolio) that are currently delegated to the Tree Team Leader and Conservation and Urban Design Team Leader be delegated to the Environmental Design Manager and the Assistant Director of Leisure Services (Services Development).
- (d) That all other job titles be updated to reflect the new structure.

13. JUBILEE FIELD, SWAY – DEVELOPERS’ CONTRIBUTIONS (REPORT H).

Cllr Rickman declared a personal interest in this item as a local member. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained present at the meeting and voted.

The Cabinet considered the allocation of developers’ contributions to enable the provision of a new play area at Jubilee Field, Sway.

RESOLVED:

That a sum of £29,700 be made available from developers’ contributions for open space to undertake the provision of a new play area at Jubilee Field, Sway subject to the means of implementation being to the satisfaction of the Director of Community Services and the Head of Legal Services.

14. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER (REPORT I).

The Cabinet considered the Annual Audit and Inspection letter that summarised the work undertaken by the Audit Commission and the District Auditor for the preceding year.

Ms K Handy, Ms A Blowman and Mr M Bowers from the Audit Commission presented the report and commented in detail on each specific area.

For the financial year 2004/05 the report concluded that the Council continued to focus on achieving its corporate objectives by utilising its resources and through its collaboration with partner organisations. The Council was demonstrating continued improvement through the effective delivery of its CPA improvement plan with clear benefits to the local community. The Inspection report also said that the Council was performing well in using the community strategy and other partnership initiatives to help meet its corporate priorities. It had strengthened its capacity to deliver improvement through more robust performance management and councillor and officer development programmes.

With regard to service delivery the Council continued to improve overall and this was reflected in the good progress made across its four key priorities. In the areas where performance was not improving in relation to those priorities the Council was taking remedial action that was starting to show results.

Members noted that the audit opinion on the financial statements for 2004/05 was qualified because the Auditors were not able to determine whether the capital accounts were presented accurately. This was a problem that was replicated nationally following the introduction of the Prudential Code that required local authorities to make different calculations. In the light of this members did not consider this to be a significant issue however, efforts were continuing to resolve the matter.

The Council's financial position continued to be soundly based and in line with the Council's agreed financial strategy. The Council had in place a robust governance and performance management framework that exceeded the minimum requirements in most respects.

The Audit Commission commented that overall the Council, previously rated an 'excellent authority' continued to improve. They said they had rarely delivered such a positive report on an authority and this was a credit to the Council's achievements.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Audit Letter for 2004/05 be noted and officers be congratulated for their excellent work.

CHAIRMAN