

3 JANUARY 2007

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 3 January 2007.

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:

C Baker
C J Harrison
Mrs M Humber
R J Neath
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton

Councillors:

Mrs B Smith
Mrs S I Snowden
C R Treleaven
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

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

Officers Attending:

D Yates, C Malyon, J Mascall, Ms J Bateman, D Brown and Mrs R Drummond and for part of the meeting Ms H Renwick.

75. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2006, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Thierry declared an interest in Minute 80 .

77. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

78. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY (REPORT A).

The Corporate Overview Panel in 2005 focused their work programme on a number of reviews around the theme of procurement of goods and services. The reviews were identified as potential areas of concern because of slippage in the capital programme, contractual issues and the general opportunities that existed around the wider procurement agenda. The Council has already agreed new Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and the Cabinet has now considered a revised Procurement Strategy.

Members noted that detailed action plans would be developed to assist with the delivery of the Strategy and provide a focus for action. In particular, the Cabinet were pleased to note that the Council would be working with the Regional Centre of Procurement Excellence to take advantage of regional collaborative opportunities and, in addition, were committed to actively engaging with small businesses in order to increase the amount of work, goods and services awarded locally.

The Cabinet noted the Employee side comments that were circulated at the meeting, and that overall, they supported the new Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Draft Procurement Strategy as set out in the Appendices to Report A to the Cabinet be approved; and
- (b) That officers and members on the Review Team be thanked for all their hard work in producing the excellent new Procurement Strategy.

79. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) for the Council. The Equality Act 2006 placed a number of specific duties on the Council including the requirement to publish a GES by no later than 5 April 2007.

Members noted that much of the content of the Scheme was already undertaken by the Council. The Action Plan and draft goals would sharpen the process and ensure that actions were put into practice

RESOLVED:

That the draft Gender Equality Scheme as detailed in Appendix 3 to Report B to the Cabinet be agreed as the Council's Scheme for April 2007 – March 2010.

80. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES 2007/08 (REPORT C).

Councillor Thierry declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a tenant of a Council owned garage. There was no discussion on this particular aspect of the report. Cllr Thierry remained present at the meeting but did not vote on this specific matter.

The Cabinet considered the draft Housing Revenue Account for 2007/08 together with the anticipated impact of the draft Subsidy Determination on the Council's 2007/08 HRA estimates.

In particular members discussed the homelessness element of the budget. The homelessness assistance work was undertaken by the Housing Needs section of the Council. Members noted that whilst there had been a reduction in the HRA budget for this area of work, funding was also available in the General Fund budget. It was agreed that members be provided with the detailed figures for this specific aspect of the budget. Members noted that the homelessness service was demand driven and therefore there would always be fluctuations in funding requirements. However, the budget was managed in a proactive way and the Cabinet commended officers for the work their work in this area.

Mrs White, the tenants' representative, confirmed that the Tenants' Consultative Group would be meeting later in January to consider the issues in this report. Their views would be reported back to the Cabinet in February. However, Mrs White indicated that they were likely to support the proposals.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That service charges in line with the detailed proposals in section 2 of Report C to the Cabinet be agreed; and**
- (b) That garage rents be increased by £1.15 per week (plus VAT for garages let to non-council tenants)**

RESOLVED:

That the reporting process outlined in paragraph 2 of Report C to the Cabinet be agreed and that, subject to the recommendations above:

- (i) The bases for preparation of the final 2007/08 estimate as outlined in Report C to the Cabinet be approved;
- (ii) The current proposed rent increase be noted but recommendations be deferred until the final report is submitted in February; and
- (iii) The inclusion of the expenditure/savings proposals not previously agreed in sections 4.3 & 4.4 of Report C to the Cabinet be agreed.

81. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND ALL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08 – 2010/11 (REPORT D).

Following their consideration of the budget in November and December, the Cabinet were updated on the work that had taken place since then, the provisional grant settlement and other proposals that would affect the General Fund budget.

Members discussed the way in which the grant settlement was formulated and the varying aspects of the revenue support grant and the non domestic rate element. Members were of the view that there was an imbalance in the distribution of the Government grant funding across the country. They asked officers to provide them with further information in relation to funding per head of population in the New Forest compared to the rest of Hampshire and the country.

In considering the detail of the budget the Cabinet noted that the level of DEFRA grant funding for local coastal protection works continued to reduce. Only the capital schemes that were contained within the current Shoreline Management Plan were fully grant funded. It was agreed that officers provide further information on any proposed capital schemes that were outside of that Plan.

The Chairman thanked the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder and all the individual committees and review panels for the work they had undertaken so far on the budget preparation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Review Panels be asked to consider the proposals contained in Report D to the Cabinet and that their comments be considered by the Cabinet in February before the final budget recommendations are made to Council;
- (b) That the amendments to the Expenditure Plan revenue proposals contained in Appendix 3 to Report D to the Cabinet be agreed subject to committee and review panel comments and final budget considerations;
- (c) That the risk assessment and Section 25 Statement contained in Appendices 1 and 2 of Report D to the Cabinet be noted;
- (d) That the capital expenditure plan proposals contained in Appendix 4 to Report D to the Cabinet be agreed subject to committee and review panel comments and final budget considerations; and
- (e) That, in the light of discussion, officers provide further information in relation to:
 - (i) Government Grant funding per head of population in the New Forest compared to the rest of Hampshire and the country; and
 - (ii) Information on capital project schemes that are outside of the current Shoreline Management Plan.

82. DELEGATIONS.

The Cabinet considered amendments to the Council's Scheme of Officer Delegations.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following delegation be agreed to amend the authorised officers shown in the Council's Scheme of Delegations in order to reflect recent changes in personnel:

Source	Power Delegated	Delegation To	Minute Reference
Local Government Act 1972 s.223	To institute, conduct, prosecute, defend and appear on behalf of the Council in Magistrates' Court in respect of alleged offences relating to housing benefit	Steven Cranston, Robert Duncan, Kenneth Hodge and Samantha Williams	Cabinet 201. of 8/4/2002

- (b) That the Council's Scheme of Delegations be updated to reflect changes in job titles and in particular to amend the wording "Housing Improvement Manager" to read "Housing Technical Manager".

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CB030107/MINUTES.DOC)