

6 JULY 2009

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 6 July 2009.

- p Cllr B Rickman (Chairman)
- p Cllr E J Heron (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- p G C Beck
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p Mrs J L Cleary

Councillors:

- p Mrs M D Holding
- p C R Treleaven
- p C A Wise

In Attendance:

Councillors:

L T Dunsdon
Ms L C Ford
D Harrison
Mrs M E Lewis
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
L R Puttock

Councillors:

Mrs B Smith
Mrs S I Snowden
F P Vickers
R A Wappet
Dr M N Whitehead
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

Mrs P White and Mrs A Murphy, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representatives.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall and Ms J Bateman and for part of the meeting G Bettle, D Brown, A Colenutt, R Easton, A Groom and K Smith.

3. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 6 and 18 May 2009, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Dundson and Wappet declared an interest in Minute No. 7.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

6. NORTH SOLENT SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered a draft North Solent Shoreline Management Plan for approval for public consultation.

The key purpose of the SMP process was to inform Defra of the potential future flood and coastal defence requirements and the associated potential financial requirements, for the England and Wales shoreline. A SMP was a non-statutory document that aimed to balance the management of coastal flooding and erosion risks, with natural processes, and the consequences of climate change.

Members noted that in areas of private ownership where remedial works were undertaken by the owner, the Council, using permissive powers and regulations if appropriate, would try to ensure that any work was carried out in an environmentally acceptable way to minimise any adverse effect on other areas.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft proposed Shoreline Management Plan policies be approved in principle;
- (b) That the Environment Portfolio Holder be delegated authority to make any subsequent changes required to the draft Shoreline Management Plan policies prior to public consultation;
- (c) That officers make representation to the Environment Agency to request that the compensatory habitat requirements identified in the Appropriate Assessment be secured and delivered through the Regional Habitat Creation Programme; and
- (d) That, following public consultation, the final Shoreline Management Plan be presented to the Cabinet and the Council for adoption.

7. SLOANE AVENUE CAR PARK, SLOANE AVENUE, HOLBURY (REPORT B).

Cllrs Dunsdon and Wappet declared personal interests as local councillors. They did not consider their interest to be prejudicial. They remained at the meeting. They did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered the disposal of Sloane Avenue Car Park, Holbury for affordable housing. The site had been declared surplus to the Council's requirements. Futures uses of the site were limited by planning constraints but a disposal for two units of affordable housing was considered achievable while at the same time producing a modest capital receipt.

The Housing Portfolio Holder was pleased to support the proposals and in particular that the new affordable housing would be constructed to Environmentally Sustainable Code Level Four standard which would make the properties more cost effective to run.

The Cabinet noted that the parish council would continue to explore possibilities for the provision of additional open space in the area.

RESOLVED:

That the Land at Sloane Avenue Car Park, Sloane Avenue, Holbury be disposed of to Atlantic Housing Association for the provision of affordable housing on the terms outlined in Report B to the Cabinet.

8. PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY – REVIEW OF GRANT POLICY AND INTRODUCTION OF LOANS (REPORT C).

The Cabinet was pleased to note that the Council had recently been awarded additional funding from the Regional Housing Board as part of a consortium of local authorities involved with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). As a result they considered proposed variations to the Council's existing Financial Assistance Policy to utilise some of the monies. They also considered a new policy to enable loans to be given to low income private sector households in the district to carry out repairs and improvements.

RESOLVED:

That the following amendments and additions to the Council's Financial Assistance Policy as detailed in Report C to the Cabinet and as summarised below be agreed:

- (i) That the maximum grant for Minor Works Assistance Grant be increased from £5,000 to £10,000. All eligibility criteria and conditions to remain the same as the current policy agreed in July 2006;
- (ii) That Home Improvement Loans of up to £30,000 be offered to low income households, utilising the additional Regional Housing Board funding, to assist with repairs/improvements to meet prescribed housing standards (e.g. Housing Health and Safety Rating System and Decent Home Standard). The Housing Portfolio Holder be given delegated authority to increase the loan to a maximum of £40,000 in exceptional circumstances;
- (iii) That Accessible Home Loans of up to £30,000, utilising the Regional Housing Board funding, be offered to low income households to 'top up' mandatory Disabled Facility Grants (DFG), where the cost of the scheme is in excess of the mandatory DFG limit;
- (iv) That Accessible Home Loans of up to £5,000, utilising Regional Housing Board funding, be offered to low income households to assist disabled homeowners to move to a new home where it is not possible to adapt their existing property, to include removal expenses, legal fees etc but not any increase in value of the new home;

- (v) That Landlord Loans of up to £30,000, utilising Regional Housing Board funding, be offered to help reduce the number of empty homes, and provide additional accommodation over shops, on condition that the property is let to a tenant nominated from the Council's register, and that the loan is repaid via the rental income generated by the end of the agreed letting period (minimum of 5 years);
- (vi) That Warm Front Top Up Grants, utilising Regional Housing Board funding be offered where the Warm Front Grant does not meet the cost of the eligible works;
- (vii) That Fuel Poverty Grants, utilising Regional Housing Board funding, be offered to assist low income homeowners who do not meet the Warm Front Grant eligibility criteria but are living in fuel poverty (defined as having to spend more than 10% of their income on keeping warm). The works to be grant aided to be the same as the Warm Front Grant works; and
- (viii) That grants of up to £10,000, utilising Regional Housing Board funding be offered, to supplement the Minor Works Assistance Grant budget if necessary. Any grants offered in these circumstances to be subject to the same eligibility criteria and conditions regardless of source of funding.

9. PROPERTY SERVICES – PROPOSED RE-STRUCTURE (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered proposals for the re-structure of Property Services. The Heads of Service management structure created a new post of Head of Property Services which brought together the property related sections previously managed in a number of different areas of the Council.

The new grouping of business units would provide a clearer focus to property related activity across the Council. A single centre of expertise would provide future opportunities to work more efficiently, share knowledge and skills and promote consistent standards and working practices.

In response to questions the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that the funding for the new post of Property Manager was possible as a result of efficiency savings that had been made elsewhere in the Council. It was expected that the re-structure would lead to further efficiency savings.

RECOMMENDED:

That an expenditure plan bid of £62,500 in 2010/11 be supported to fund a new post of Property Manager.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the agreement of the recommendation above:

- (a) a new post of Property Manager be agreed together with a supplementary budget of £30,000 in 2009/10 to fund the new post in the current year; and

- (b) the proposed new Property Services Structure as identified in Appendix 3 to Report D to the Cabinet be approved.

10. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY ACTION PLANS 2008/09 AND 2009/10 (REPORT E).

The Cabinet considered the performance as reported by the individual Community Action Networks (CANs) against the 2008/09 actions and the proposals being put forward by the CANs for 2009/10.

Overall performance showed just over 75% of actions were achieved.

The draft action plan detailed which Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and projected outcomes the actions were contributing towards. It would be developed further to show where the actions contributed to Local Area Agreement Targets and National Indicators.

The Cabinet noted that the Local Strategic Partnership at their meeting on 3 July 2009 supported the approval of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the performance against the 2008/09 Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) action plan be noted and the SCS action plan for 2009/10 be agreed.

11. GREEN AUDIT DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLANS (REPORT F).

The Cabinet considered the final three improvement plans arising from the Green Audit.

The Plans related to the way households were run; the way the Council worked with businesses and the way in which communities were run.

The Environment Portfolio Holder was pleased to support the improvement plans and particularly thanked Cllr Mrs Smith for her hard work as part of the Green Audit Board. In response to a question relating to the collection and treatment of food and organic waste, the Cabinet noted that some members of the Environment Review Panel had visited an Eco Processing Plant at Hurn which had provided them with a useful insight into that area of recycling. The Portfolio Holder said that the Waste and Recycling Working Party were continually reviewing all options.

RESOLVED:

That the Green Audit Improvement plans relating to the way households were run; the way the Council worked with businesses and the way in which communities were run be approved.

12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2008/09 ANNUAL REPORT (REPORT G).

The Cabinet considered the Annual Treasury report which was a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures and covered the treasury activity for 2008/09. The Cabinet also considered the actual Prudential Indicators for 2008/09 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder, in discussing the detail of the report particularly commented on the negative impact on the Council's income of the reduction in interest rates. He was pleased that the Council continued to be debt free and was forecast to remain so.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report of the Treasury Management Service and the Actual Prudential Indicators for 2008/09 be noted.

13. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008 – 2012 (REPORT H).

The Cabinet considered the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that set out the broad financial framework that the Council would operate within during the forthcoming years, in support of the Corporate Plan approved in 2008.

The actions taken by the Council to deliver an annual balanced budget in both 2008/09 and 2009/10 had been achieved despite the extremely volatile financial climate experienced. The savings achieved had been made in a manner which had endeavoured to maintain performance and priority services provided to the community. However, over the next few years there remained considerable financial uncertainty with the likelihood of actual reductions in grant levels

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder supported the work done so far but said that the work would need to continue to maintain the Council's position.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the actions taken with regard to the financial outturn 2008/09 be noted;
- (b) That the achievement of a balanced budget in 2009/10 be noted;
- (c) That the resources now identified as available to progress Asset Management projects previously deferred be noted;
- (d) That the Medium Term Financial Plan projections for 2010/11 & 2011/12 which identify the need to develop a plan for delivering approximately £4 million of annual savings over the plan period be noted;
- (e) That the continued work required to be undertaken by Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service to deliver the Savings & Efficiency Plan as detailed in Appendix 2 to Report H to the Cabinet be noted; and

- (f) That the provision of £974,000 of reserves that have been set aside to support the Council's ongoing Savings & Efficiency Plan be noted.

14. PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE (PUSH) BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2009 (REPORT I).

The Cabinet considered the PUSH Business Plan each year which set out its proposed actions and priorities. The Plan must be individually approved by the eleven Local Authority partners, to provide the mandate for the Joint Committee to take the necessary decisions and actions to implement the Business Plan.

The Cabinet noted that, in the light of the economic climate, the Plan would evolve and in 2010 the Housing and Economic Growth targets would need to be re-considered.

RECOMMENDED:

That the PUSH Business Plan 2009-11, as a basis for the operations of the PUSH Joint Committee, be agreed.

15. SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS OF POWERS TO OFFICERS (REPORT J).

The Cabinet considered a number of updates to the Scheme of Delegations of Powers to Officers to reflect changes in establishment and working practices.

RESOLVED:

That the changes to the Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers, as attached as Appendix 1 to Report J to the Cabinet, be approved.

16. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY.

- (a) South East Employers' Organisation**

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Mrs Holding and Wise be appointed as the Council's two representatives with Councillors Kendal and Ward as substitutes on the South East Employers' Organisation.

(b) Local Strategic Partnership

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Rickman be appointed as an additional representative to the New Forest Local Strategic Partnership.

17. DATES OF MEETINGS.

The Cabinet considered the dates for their future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the following dates for Cabinet meetings in 2010/11, all Wednesdays at 10.00 a.m. unless otherwise indicated, be agreed:-

2 June 2010

5 July 2010 (Monday to accommodate the annual LGA Conference week)

4 August 2010

1 September 2010

6 October 2010

3 November 2010

1 December 2010

5 January 2011

2 February 2011

2 March 2011

6 April 2011

4 May 2011

CHAIRMAN