

2 JUNE 2010

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 2 June 2010.

- p Cllr B Rickman (Chairman) (In the Chair for part of the meeting)
- 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:

Mrs F Carpenter
Ms L C Ford
J D Heron
Mrs P Jackman
Mrs M E Lewis
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
L R Puttock

Councillors:

A W Rice TD
F P Vickers
R A Wappet
J G Ward
A Weeks
Dr M N Whitehead

Also In Attendance:

Mrs Murphy and Mr Waters, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representatives.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascal, Ms J Bateman C Elliott and Miss G O'Rourke and for part of the meeting Mrs L Evans.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Weeks, the newly elected leader of the Liberal Democrat group.

4. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 17 May and 7 April 2010, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Beck declared an interest in Minute No. 7
Cllr Rice declared an interest in Minute Nos. 7 and 11
Cllr Mrs Ford declared an interest in Minute No. 10
Cllrs Mrs Holding and Rickman declared interests in Minute No. 11
Cllrs E J Heron, J D Heron and Weeks declared interests in Minute Nos. 10 and 11

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

7. NEW MILTON LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (REPORT A).

Cllrs Beck and Rice declared personal interests as members of New Milton Town Council. They did not consider their interest to be prejudicial. They both remained at the meeting. Cllr Beck spoke and voted. Cllr Rice did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered the detail of the New Milton Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder said that this was the first of a series of documents that the Council was proposing. The publication of Planning Policy Statement 3 early in 2007 allowed the Council discretion to take a far more robust approach to resisting inappropriate development. As a result a series of Local Distinctiveness SPDs were being produced to revise planning policies in the adopted Core Strategy.

The proposed SPD was fully supported by New Milton Town Council, HCC and the New Milton Town Partnership.

Members noted a factual correction in the Town Design Statement where the second sentence of the third paragraph of 2.4 on page 15, relating to unsold houses and flats being transferred to a housing association, would be deleted.

RESOLVED:

That the New Milton Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document, as set out in Appendices B and C of Report A to the Cabinet, be adopted as part of the Local Development Framework for New Forest District (outside the National Park).

8. HAMPSHIRE LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (LPSA2) (REPORT B).

As part of the county wide LPSA2 agreement the Council had received notification of its share of the reward grant totalling over £900,000. The grant demonstrated the continued benefits of partnership working across the county.

A principle of the LPSA2 agreement was that a proportion of the reward grant would be reinvested in services that contributed towards the overall achievement and maintenance of the performance levels attained. The Cabinet therefore considered a number of specific proposals (as set out in Appendix B to Report B to them) put forward for use of approximately £362,000 of the reward grant to enable projects which had contributed to the improvement in performance to continue. The remainder of the grant would be included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan that had been developed on that basis.

RECOMMENDED:

That the use of the LPSA2 Reward Grant, as set out in Appendix B of Report B to the Cabinet be agreed, with the balance of funding being allocated to support the Medium Term Financial Plan.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT – PROVISIONAL 2009/2010 OUTTURN POSITION (REPORT C).

The Cabinet gave early consideration to the 2009/10 projected outturn positions for the General Fund; Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder commented that the new Government's budget due shortly would give a better understanding of the position however, the Council due to their excellent results from the savings and efficiency programme, were in a good position to move forward.

Members noted that in line with the Council's financial strategy, work had continued to identify further savings and efficiencies. The provisional outturn now identified that the Council's net expenditure would be £20.244 million. That represented a further saving of £1.446 million for the year and supported the Council's Medium Term Financial plan.

The main contributions towards the overall savings were approximately £500,000 from income improvements in Building Control; Land Charges; Health and Leisure Centres and Interest earnings. In addition, the Health and Leisure Services review had brought forward savings of over £300,000 in 2009/10, earlier than originally anticipated. The control on vacancies which was instigated had delivered savings across all service areas in excess of £200,000. Full details of budget savings and variations would be reported to the Final Accounts Committee on 18 June 2010 on completion of the Statement of Accounts.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the provisional General Fund outturn position be noted;
- (b) That the reduced transfer of £500,000 to the savings and efficiency reserve be approved;
- (c) That the balance of the final actual General Fund underspend be transferred to the Capital Programme Reserve;
- (d) That the provisional outturn position of the Capital Programme be noted;
and

- (e) That the provisional outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

10. RINGWOOD GATEWAY SCHEME, FURLONG CAR PARK, RINGWOOD (REPORT D).

Cllrs Mrs Ford and J D Heron declared personal interests as members of Ringwood Town Council. Cllrs E J Heron and Weeks declared personal interests as members of Hampshire County Council. They did not consider their interests to be prejudicial. They remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion. Only Cllr E J Heron had a vote.

The Cabinet considered a proposed Ringwood Gateway Scheme offering the potential to deliver an enhanced level of public service from a single high quality building in the town centre.

The scheme aimed to provide a single public interface for the town, district and county councils; maintain a Registrar service in Ringwood and provide a new public convenience.

The Chairman said that he was very pleased with the proposal, developed with local members and partners, which would deliver joined up public services for the benefit of local residents, visitors and district taxpayers. The design for the scheme would be shared with the public prior to the formal planning process and work would continue with county and town council partners to ensure delivery of a successful project.

The Environment Portfolio Holder said that he was pleased to support the Ringwood Gateway Project which, in the current economic climate would demonstrate the most efficient method of service delivery.

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder supported the proposal and was pleased that it recognised the amenity value of the site which was an important consideration for local people. He said that the scheme would provide a high quality building with much improved pedestrian areas.

An important aspect of the scheme was that it would be self financing in that it would be fully funded from the sale of existing buildings and contributions from the partner authorities (plus money already committed for new Public Toilets). Members noted that it would also allow more services to be provided at lower annual running costs, thus delivering savings for all partners.

Cllr Mrs Ford said that the scheme was fully supported by the Town Council. Whilst looking forward to the new building, she stressed the importance of ensuring that it both suited and enhanced the local environment.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That approval be granted to proceed with the Ringwood Gateway Project as set out in Report D to the Cabinet;**

- (b) *That authority be granted to the Executive Directors in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Efficiency and the Portfolio Holder for the Environment (the "Relevant Portfolio Holders") to finalise the details of the Heads of Terms between the partner Local Authorities;*
- (c) *That authority be granted to dispose of Christchurch Road Public Offices for the best consideration by either freehold or lease, (the final decision being taken by the Executive Directors in consultation with the Relevant Portfolio Holders);*
- (d) *That authority be granted to the Executive Directors in consultation with the Relevant Portfolio Holders, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Head of Property Services to:-*
 - (i) *enter into all necessary legal documentation with the partner Local Authorities to give effect to the draft Heads of Terms set out in Appendix 3 and within the financial parameters set out in the report (subject to any revised terms being agreed by the Relevant Portfolio Holders and the Executive Directors).*
 - (ii) *enter into all other necessary contracts to ensure the Gateway Project proceeds within the financial parameters set out in the report.*

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Ringwood Gateway Project be supported and Councillors E J Heron be appointed as the Chairman of the Ringwood Gateway Project Board and Cllr Wise be appointed as the NFDC representative member.

11. OPTIMISATION OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR SHARED ACCOMMODATION WITH THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (REPORT E).

Cllrs Mrs Holding, E J Heron, J D Heron, Rice, Rickman and Weeks declared personal and prejudicial interests in this item as appointed representatives on the New Forest National Park Authority. After making statements as detailed below they left the meeting during consideration of this matter.

Cllr Rickman thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken in bringing this project forward. He fully supported the proposals which he said would not only be good for the Council and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) but the greatest benefit would be to the local tax payer.

Cllr Mrs Holding also thanked officers and agreed that the most important benefit was to local tax payers.

Cllr Weeks supported the proposal which enabled the NFNPA to draw national grant funding into the district which could only be of benefit locally.

Cllr J D Heron supported the proposal but asked for further information in relation to the Council opting, for Value Added Tax purposes, to tax the rental income.

Cllr Wise took the Chair for consideration of this item.

Mr A Cornick, Employee Side Representative, addressed the Cabinet. He said that his members welcomed the retention of a Council presence in Lymington but expressed some concern at the speed of the transition for staff. There was some concern over the open plan style of offices. In his view the increased noise levels and reduced privacy for managers meant that the benefits of that style of working were questionable.

In particular he expressed concern for the staff in the contact centre who were mainly part time and upon whom the increase in travel costs would place a greater burden.

Mr Cornick said that he felt that the timeframe for the process from July 2010 to March 2011 was too condensed and should be staggered. He also felt that there should be more detail available on the business case and the mitigation of risk.

The Cabinet considered proposals for the more efficient use of office accommodation. The Council's 'One Site' objective had previously identified Appletree Court as the preferred 'single site'. In 2009 an option arose to share Lymington Town Hall with the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) and discussions had been taking place with the NFNPA and the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

In order for DEFRA financial support to be guaranteed, the NFNPA needed to be able to commence work in their proposed area of Lymington Town Hall by October 2010. That would enable them to deliver their investment for a substantial refurbishment during 2010/11.

Members noted the potential options for the future use of the Town Hall. They considered the detail of the financial business case; the procurement arrangements and the risk assessment.

In order to meet the shortened timescales the Cabinet noted that a budget of £40,000 had been approved by the Executive Director under the Council's urgency powers. That budget provided for external assistance on a number of issues that enabled the business case to be developed.

The proposal put forward would make the three storey block at the front of Lymington Town Hall available to NFNPA on a 15 year lease. The Council would need to vacate approximately 80 employees and relocate them in other parts of the Council's accommodation portfolio.

In order to progress the programme of accommodation moves a budget of £3 million would be needed to be funded from reserves already set aside. The Medium Term Financial Plan already provided for £1 million for Office Optimisation. A further £2 million was available from savings on the efficiency reserve and from savings achieved in 2009/10 (£1.4 million). Existing Capital and Revenue Reserves would be unaffected.

The financial benefits to the Council of the joint use of Lymington Town Hall were estimated to be in the region of £6 million over the 15 year term of the lease equivalent to over £400,000 per annum (approximately £350,000 in revenue savings and £50,000 in avoided costs). That represented a return on the required initial investment of approximately 14% per annum gross and approximately 7% net which compared against a potential cash return in the region of 5%.

A number of members spoke in support of the proposal particularly commenting on the benefits that the scheme would bring to Lymington as a town.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that he had been involved in all the discussions and whilst the speed of the process was an issue, every effort would be made to complete it as smoothly as possible. The shared use of office accommodation at Lymington Town Hall supported the Council's Strategy for making better use of its assets. Closer working with the NFNPA had the advantage of delivering wider benefits and efficiencies to the community and local taxpayer. One of the benefits to Lymington as a town would be an additional 40 car parking spaces that, in common with all parking spaces on the Town Hall site, would be available for public use at peak weekend and bank holiday periods.

After discussion the Cabinet fully supported the office optimisation proposals as set out in Report E to them.

RECOMMENDED:-

- (a) That approval be granted to proceed with finalising arrangements with NFNPA and DEFRA on the basis set out in Report E to the Cabinet;**
- (b) That authority be granted to the Executive Directors in consultation with the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder to finalise the details of the Heads of Terms between the parties;**
- (c) That authority be granted to the Executive Directors in consultation with the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Head of Property Services to:-**
 - (i) enter into all necessary legal documentation with the parties to give effect to the draft Heads of Terms set out and within the financial parameters set out in the report (subject to any revised terms being agreed by the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder and the Executive Directors); and**
 - (ii) enter into all other necessary contracts to ensure the Project proceeds within the financial parameters set out in the report.**

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for sharing Lymington Town Hall with the New Forest National Park Authority as set out in Report E to the Cabinet be supported.

12. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATION.

Cllr E Heron took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

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.

13. DATES OF MEETINGS.

The Cabinet considered the dates for their future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the following dates for Cabinet meetings in 2011/12, all Wednesdays at 10.00 a.m., be agreed:-

1 June 2011
6 July 2011
3 August 2011
7 September 2011
5 October 2011
2 November 2011
7 December 2011
4 January 2012
1 February 2012
7 March 2012
4 April 2012
2 May 2012

CHAIRMAN