

5 JANUARY 2011

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 5 January 2011.

- 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:

Ms L C Ford
H F Forse
Mrs M E Lewis
L R Puttock
A W Rice TD
Mrs M J Robinson
Mrs Rostand

Councillors:

Mrs B Smith
Mrs S I Snowden
J Ward
A Weeks
Dr M N Whitehead
Mrs P A Wyeth

Also In Attendance:

Mrs A Murphy, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representative.

Mr A Cornick, Employee Side Representative (Unison Branch Secretary)

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall, Ms J Bateman and Miss G O'Rourke and D Atwill, D Brown and Ms M Sandhu.

48. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2010 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with any agenda item.

50. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

51. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT – RECENT ADVERSE WEATHER.

The Chairman commented on the work of the Council in responding to the recent adverse weather and said that on Radio Solent today he had heard a member of the public complimenting the Council on their excellent response.

The snow fall on Saturday 18 December 2010 meant that the Refuse Collection service were not able to reach approximately 20,000 properties on Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 December 2010. Once the situation started to improve refuse teams worked long hours to catch up and used resources from other sections such as Grounds Maintenance and Street Scene. By Christmas Eve all but around 3,500 properties, some of whom still had access issues due to ice and snow, had had their refuse collected.

Grounds Maintenance Teams were also working on 18 December 2010 clearing snow in council car parks and assisting HCC with clearance of shopping areas across the district. Those teams continued to salt and grit car parks and sheltered housing sites throughout the week leading up to Christmas.

The Chairman, the Environment Portfolio Holder, the Opposition Group and all members unanimously thanked Colin Read, Head of Environment Services, his Environment Teams and other employees for the no nonsense way in which they had tackled the situation to ensure that disruption across the district was kept to a minimum.

Action: Colin Read

52. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND ANNUAL BUDGET 2011/2012 (REPORT A).

The Cabinet was updated on the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2010/15 and the annual budget for 2011/12.

The Chairman in introducing the item welcomed the Employee Side representative and thanked officers and employees for their work and co-operation in the budget preparation process so far. All review panels and committees would be invited to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan at their January meetings. Portfolio Holders would attend all meetings to give as much input as possible.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder outlined the main challenges that the Council faced. The Council had to reduce their net spend by £2.7m over the next two financial years. There had been a 15.7% reduction in Government grant in

2011/2012 and a 10.3% reduction for 2012/2013 making a 26% total over the two years. That would mean a reduction in overall net expenditure of 7.2% in 2011/2012 and 4.7% in 2012/2013. There would be a total cut in expenditure of over £4m over the four years to 2015.

Simultaneously the Council was also experiencing high inflation with items such as fuel costs rising and reducing income from low interest rates. There were also continuing effects from the recession in terms of other income streams.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that in addressing the situation he supported the Leader's statement that the Council would not be increasing council tax and was pleased that the government would provide approximately £284,000 in support of this action; they would not use pricing as a solution; they would not reduce significant services and did not want to make major redundancies.

Work had been progressing over many months to streamline the Council's activities and over 800 savings ideas had been received from employees. A vacancy freeze was in place with positions only being filled if the work could not be absorbed elsewhere in the service. Asset sharing was also underway with the New Forest National Park moving into the Town Hall at Lymington.

The Portfolio Holder said that he was confident that the Council could achieve the task before them but only with the close co-operation of employees and the unions. The public wanted to see a Council that was efficient and effective and the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan would do that with the minimum of pain.

It was important that all Members through the work of the Review Panels had the opportunity to consider the implications of the savings being proposed within the 'Workstreams' before the Council agreed its budget for 2011/12 in February. The 'workstream' process was targeting 'back office' and support activities in the first instance. The significant scale of the reductions in budget would impact on the look of the Council and the senior management structure would be reviewed as one of the 'workstreams' to reflect this.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he supported no increase in council tax or significant reduction in services. Whilst he accepted that the Medium Term Financial Plan was still work in progress he was of the view that some of the work to this point had been piecemeal.

Members agreed that with the budget development being an ongoing process rather than an annual one, the Council was in strong position, given the current circumstances, to move forward.

RESOLVED:

That the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Draft Annual Budget 2011/12 be developed further for the Cabinet meeting in February to enable a recommendation to be made to Council in February enabling a budget requirement and Council Tax to be set for 2011/12.

Action: Bob Jackson

CHAIRMAN