

1 JUNE 2011

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 1 June 2011.

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

Councillors:

- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p Mrs J L Cleary

Councillors:

- e F P Vickers
- p C A Wise

In Attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs S M Bennison
C J Harrison
Mrs A J Hoare
Mrs P Jackman
Mrs M E Lewis
Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton

Councillors:

L R Puttock
Mrs A M Rostand
Mrs C V Ward
J G Ward
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

Mr M Akerman and Mrs A Murphy, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representatives.

Mr A Cornick, Employee side representative.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall and Ms J Bateman and for part of the meeting D Brown, R Millard and K Smith.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) Members noted that Keith Smith, Head of Performance and Strategic Development was leaving the authority after 28 years' service. The Chairman thanked Keith for all his hard work and dedicated service. All members and officers joined the Chairman in wishing Keith all the very best for the future.
- (b) The Chairman welcomed Cllr C J Harrison to his first meeting of the Cabinet as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.
- (c) The Chairman welcomed Alison Barnes, Chief Executive of the New Forest National Park Authority, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

4. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 6 April and 16 May 2011 be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr C Harrison declared a personal interest in Minute no. 9.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

7. FINANCIAL REPORT – PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2010/11 (REPORT A).

The Cabinet considered the initial projected 2010/11 outturn positions for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme. Members noted that in a continuing difficult economic position the Council had, at year end, still managed to achieve a balanced budget.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that a number of the income variances such as interest rates would continue to have an impact in future years and noted others such as Dibden Golf Centre and Concessionary Fares. The financial position of the Council's Health and Leisure Centres was improving and overall the portfolio savings were in line with expectations.

Members noted that the Government had recently published comparison cost statistics for Councils in England giving comparable spend per head of population. New Forest District Council was amongst the lowest at £830 per head with the average in the country being £1017 per head. The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that in his view this indicated that the Council was 20% more efficient than others.

In response to a question in relation to a reduction in income from car park penalty charges it was noted that this was a reflection of a national picture. Whilst there had been some long term sickness in that service area that was not seen to be an issue for the future. The car parking enforcement element of the service was in line to be reviewed as part of the Council's overall programme of saving reviews.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the provisional General Fund outturn position be noted;
- (b) That the provisional outturn position of the Capital Programme be noted;
and
- (c) That the provisional outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account be noted.

Action: Bob Jackson

8. INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) ON THE COUNCIL'S CIVIC ESTATE AND HOUSING STOCK (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered proposals for the installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels on the Council's civic estate and social housing using the financial incentives available through the Feed In Tariffs (FITs) and the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

The Environment Portfolio Holder said that this was one of many elements of the Council's sustainability agenda. Members noted that the proposals provided an excellent opportunity for the Council to move its sustainability agenda forward whilst at the same time producing financial savings.

In discussing the proposals members agreed that these should be widened to include heat source ground pumps and all other available technologies. In particular Members agreed that priority should be given to investigating the potential of using the Council's sheltered housing stock as a pilot scheme for the proposals.

A number of other members spoke in support of the proposals which would benefit not only the environment but would provide an income stream to the Council in future years.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, subject to 11.2 below the development of PV schemes for both the Civic estate and housing stock be supported;
- (b) That for the housing stock the potential for entering into an arrangement with a Solar PV provider for the free fit, supply and maintenance of the panels for a share of the Feed in Tariff be explored further;
- (c) That priority be given to investigating the potential for a pilot scheme on the Council's sheltered housing stock;
- (d) That appropriate procurement processes be identified that satisfy legal requirements;
- (e) That a project board be set up to oversee the implementation of these projects and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Directors in consultation with the portfolio holders for Environment, Finance & Efficiency and Housing & Communities to agree contracts that achieve the best financial return to the Council, benefits to the tenants and the environment; and
- (f) That the Council be recommended to agree to the provision of £150,000 to fund the installation of Solar PV schemes at Appletree Court and Lymington Town Hall for implementation by 31 March 2012.

Action: John Mascal/Geoff Bettle

9. DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE SERVICE REVIEW – PROCUREMENT OPTIONS (REPORT C).

Cllr C Harrison declared a personal interest as a member of Hythe and Dibden Parish Council. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion. He did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered options for the future management arrangements of the Dibden Golf Centre. They noted the employee side comments that had been circulated at the meeting.

Mr A Cornick, Employee Side Representative addressed the Cabinet. He said that the Employee Side had three main concerns over the proposals which he had outlined in Appendix 7 of the circulated comments. In particular they were concerned that employees should not be disadvantaged in terms of pension rights or pay agreements; that although there might be short term improvements at the Golf Centre in the long term there would be higher prices and more exclusivity; and that the Golf Centre site itself was a valuable asset to the Council and every effort should be made to retain it.

In discussing the detail, members noted that any agreement with a third party would include a 'fair deal agreement' to safeguard employee benefits.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder commented that the profit at Dibden Golf Centre had been falling. He agreed that the land was a valuable asset and its ownership should remain with the Council. He was of the view that no more council tax payers money should be invested in the Golf Centre but supported the option of a partnership arrangement to attract third party investment to make the Council's asset more profitable and viable.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he could not support the decision being taken by the Cabinet without full and proper scrutiny and consultation. This was an ideal opportunity for the Council's new scrutiny arrangements to be used.

In answer to a question members noted last year there had been a net operating profit of approximately £15,000 at Dibden Golf Centre however, the overall cost to the council tax payer was in the region of £67,000 taking into account the overheads required centrally to support the centre.

The Chief Executive commented that the revised working arrangements of the Council's scrutiny system were still being finalised with the Chairmen. However, the options for the future management arrangements at Dibden Golf Centre would, in the first instance, be considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Cabinet was being asked to agree a formal tender process and not the final decision on the future of the Golf Centre. No proposals were being made for the sale of the freehold of the land. The 'medium term lease' proposals could refer to any form of management contract that was considered suitable.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That potential partners be formally identified through an EU tender process to secure the future on going provision of golf at Dibden;
- (b) That tenders be invited on the basis of a medium term lease/management contract for the operation and management of Dibden Golf Centre;

- (c) That in line with the Council's Standing Orders as to Contracts, a specialist golf advisor be appointed to assist in managing the tender process;
- (d) That the proposed date of implementation for the new arrangements be 1 April 2012; and
- (e) The detail of the tender to be approved by the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Action: Bob Millard

10. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Mrs Ford, M S Wade and Woods (Substitute Councillor C J Harrison) be appointed to serve on the New Forest Environmental Protection Liaison Committee for the four year period ending 31 May 2015.

Action: Jan Debnam

CHAIRMAN