

5 OCTOBER 2011

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 5 October 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:

p F P Vickers
p C A Wise

In Attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs S M Bennison
Ms L C Ford
D Harrison
Mrs A J Hoare

Councillors:

J Penwarden
D B Tipp
J G Ward
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

Mr G Waters, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representative.

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall, J Bull, A Groom, G Miles, Miss G O'Rourke and Ms J Bateman and for part of the meeting D Brown and T Elsbury.

26. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Mrs Brooks and D Harrison declared interests in Minute no 33.

28. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Cllr Mark Steele (Ringwood Town and Bransgore Parish Council) addressed the Cabinet in relation to the setting of fees for parking clocks and car park meter charges as from 1 January 2012 (Report E Minute no. 33).

Cllr Steele expressed concern over the decision making process and the precise mechanism for the proposed increase in charges. He understood the reasoning in relation to the increases in non domestic rates but felt that this was in conflict with other policies. In particular he pointed out that the Ringwood Town Access Plan cited the importance of the historic market town and the need to support the local economy and market. He said that any parking policy should be a fundamental part of an overall transport policy.

Cllr Steele thanked officers for their help and the information given on this particular matter.

Cllr Neville Chard (Ringwood Town Council) addressed the Cabinet in relation to the setting of fees for parking clocks and car park meter charges as from 1 January 2012 (Report E Minute no. 33).

Cllr Chard said that the proposals amounted to a 66% increase in charges and he considered this unreasonable. He felt that the increase in charges would have a negative impact on retail stores in Ringwood and the Meeting House complex at a time when shoppers should be encouraged. He would have supported a more moderate increase. Cllr Chard was of the view that Ringwood should be considered as an exceptional case.

29. NATIONAL NETWORK OF STRATEGIC REGIONAL COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAMMES (2012-2017) UPDATE (REPORT A)

The Cabinet considered an update on the Strategic Coastal Monitoring programmes and the funding application. Members were pleased to note the success of the funding application and the excellent work of the Coastal Monitoring team. The programmes would enable financial savings to be achieved across partner authorities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the successful funding application for the South East Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme be noted and that £12.3m was now available for the 5 year phase from April 2012 – March 2017; and
- (b) That the arrangements relating to the Council's role in Project Management and Procurement for the Monitoring Programme be supported.

Action: Andy Bradbury

30. REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered changes to the Council's Private Sector Financial Assistance Policy. It was proposed that, in future, zero interest loans from the existing renovation grant budget would be offered instead of non repayable grants. This would enable the funds to be recycled when the loan was repaid and therefore help a greater number of people.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the amendments and additions to the Financial Assistance Policy as detailed in paragraphs 3 to 4 of Report B be approved; and
- (b) That the Senior Private Sector Housing Officer be given delegated authority to reject applications that are not considered reasonable and an appropriate use of the limited budget, subject to consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Action: Tony Elsbury

31. PROPOSED INTER-TIDAL MUDFLAT RECHARGE – LYMINGTON RIVER (REPORT C).

The Cabinet considered the detail of arrangements for a licence to enable works to be undertaken to Boldre foreshore.

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder said that the Council was the leaseholder of the land which it then sub-let to other parties. The Licence would enable re-charge work to be undertaken to the mudflats off the Boldre foreshore. The Portfolio Holder said that this decision was irrespective of any future decision in relation to Wightlink ferries.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, be authorised to finalise and complete the necessary legal documentation in order to give effect to the Council's consent to the carrying out of the recharge works on the land on which the Council has a leasehold interest.

Action: Grainne O'Rourke/Andy Groom

32. NOTICE OF MOTION – REDUCTION IN CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered a Notice of Motion that had been put forward at the Council meeting on 18 July 2011. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 15 September 2011 supported the Motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be noted and the matter be referred to the Council for a response.

Action: Jane Bateman

33. SETTING OF FEES FOR PARKING CLOCKS AND CAR PARK METER CHARGES AS FROM 1 JANUARY 2012 (REPORT E).

Cllr Mrs Brooks and Cllr D Harrison declared personal and prejudicial interests in this item as members of Totton and Eling Town Council. As local members they had both already considered and voted against the proposed increases. Cllr Mrs Brooks also held a Beach Hut Car Park pass. Cllr Mrs Brooks left the meeting during consideration of this item. Cllr Harrison remained at the meeting and took part in the discussion. He did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered the setting of fees for Parking Clocks and Car Park Meter charges.

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder said that compared to 2010 the car parking service budget was showing a significant deficit. A revaluation of the rateable value of car parks had resulted in additional National Non Domestic Rateable (NNDR) costs of £150,000 in 2011/12. The increase in VAT in January 2011 had also meant that car parking income had reduced by £50,000 a year. With the loss of transitional relief the budget deficit would continue to rise if nothing was done to address it.

The Portfolio Holder said that car parking charges had never been used just as a source of income generation. The net income from car parking per head of population in the New Forest district was £5.27 whereas in adjacent areas such as Christchurch Borough Council the income per head of population was £29.

The Council had already absorbed a £1.6m budget reduction through efficiency savings. The current pay and display charges had not changed since April 2009. The proposal was to raise the cost of a short stay parking clock to £20 which equated to providing unlimited short stay parking for 40p per week. The cost of the long stay parking clock was proposed at £100 which equated to providing unlimited long stay parking for £2 per week. In neighbouring authorities of Test Valley Borough Council the equivalent cost was approximately £550 and in Christchurch Borough Council the equivalent cost was approximately £257. The Portfolio Holder said that there was no evidence to support the view that that level of charge would have a detrimental effect on the local economy.

The Cabinet noted that it was proposed that Amenity Parking clocks, which were 'car specific' and expensive to administer, would no longer be issued and that people would be encouraged to purchase a long stay parking clock instead.

The Portfolio Holder said that he considered the proposals to be a very fair deal and that no other local authority sought to support residents and businesses in the same way.

Other members spoke in support of the proposals and said that the increases meant that car drivers bore the costs rather than council tax payers in general. It was not felt that there was any justification for special treatment for various areas of the district.

Cllr David Harrison, spokesman for the Liberal Democrat Group, said that whilst he accepted that the Council was the victim of Government taxes and increases, the proposed car parking increases did not take account of the consequences of the latest freeze in council tax. He also said that there had been no consultation with local businesses.

Cllr Harrison was of the view that it was fundamentally wrong to treat the whole district in the same way as there were very different pressures across different areas. He would also have preferred to have seen some differentiation between resident and visitor parking charges.

The Leader said that the Majority Group had always been working towards no rise in Council Tax to support local people.

In terms of consultation the Cabinet noted that the proposals were not a change in policy. A lot of correspondence had been received on the proposals and, on balance, most people agreed that the changes represented a very fair deal for the district.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, subject to the 3 monthly clock periods in paragraph 3.1 being amended to read :-

January – March
April – June
July - September
October – December

the revised charges set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of Report E to the Cabinet be agreed and introduced as from 1 January 2012 and that clock prices be fixed for two years; and

- (b) That an amendment to the District of New Forest (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2005 be advertised to propose the withdrawal of amenity permits.

CHAIRMAN

(CB051011)