

6 FEBRUARY 2013

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 February 2013.

- 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 D E Andrews
G C Beck
Mrs S V Beeton
Mrs S Bennison
A T Glass
C J Harrison
Mrs P Jackman
Mrs M E Lewis

Councillors:

J Penwarden
L R Puttock
Mrs A M Rostand
A J Swain
M S Wade
Mrs C Ward
J G Ward

Also In Attendance:

Mr M Ackerman, Tenant Representative

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascal, D Brown, Miss J Debnam, C Elliott and Miss G O'Rourke.

55. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Beeton in respect of Minute 58.

57. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

58. MILFORD-ON-SEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (REPORT A).

Cllr Beeton disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Milford on Sea Parish Council, who were the applicants, and as Chairman of the Steering Group working on the Neighbourhood Plan. She concluded that there were no issues under common law to prevent her from taking part in the debate. She did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered a request from Milford on Sea Parish Council for grant aid of £19,100 to cover their expenses in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. The District Council was entitled to government grant aid of £30,000 to cover its costs associated with the preparation of the plan, which included the statutory costs of running the Examination and of holding a referendum before the plan could be adopted. These costs were projected to be of the order of £20,000, with the cost to this Council of dedicated officer and other support estimated to be a further £10,000. The Government's grant was payable in instalments, with the first instalment, of £5,000, now due following the designation of the area to be covered by the Plan.

The Cabinet noted the Parish Council's request that there should be flexibility to allow this Council to fund a greater proportion of the costs should finance become available. It was noted that this was the first neighbourhood plan to be progressed in this District and the cost and demand on officer time were largely unknown at this stage. Experience through developing this plan would inform the decision on any future applications for assistance in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Milford on Sea Parish Council be offered reasonable Planning Policy Officer support and £5,000 towards the expenses they will incur in the production of their Neighbourhood Plan; and
- (b) That a further report be made to the Cabinet in due course identifying learning points for any further neighbourhood plans.

Action: Chris Elliott

59. DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS (REPORT B).

The Cabinet was advised that, historically, these mandatory grants had been funded by government grants for 60% of the cost, with the Council's 40% contribution provided through capital receipts from Right to Buy sales. Although the Government had recently announced additional grant aid of £173,000 for 2012/13, to supplement the original grant of £387,000, the demand had increased, leading to a forecast overspend of £40,000 against the total budget, although this Council's contribution would in fact be reduced.

In addition, although in future government grant was expected to cover the majority of the cost of Disabled Facility Grants, the Council would still be expected to make up any shortfall. Under the new rules applying to the use of capital receipts from Right to Buy sales, this source of funding could no longer be used for grants. Once the current reserves had been used, in about 4-5 years' time, alternative sources of funding would have to be identified.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the anticipated level of over-expenditure on the Disabled Facilities Grant budget of £40,000 for 2012/13 be approved, but that it be noted that, due to the receipt of additional Government grant, the overall use of capital receipts for the year will reduce from £163,000 to £30,000; and
- (b) That the anticipated financial position relating to Disabled Facilities Grant/Private Sector Renewal Grant financing in the medium term, once existing useable capital receipts have been utilised, be noted.

Action: Dave Brown

60. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND HOUSING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME (REPORT C).

The Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account budget and capital programme for 2013/14. Members were advised that the Housing Policy Focus Group supported the proposed rent and service charge increases and considered that they represented a prudent and sensitive approach to the need to achieve rent restructuring. The tenants remained very satisfied with the Council's management of the housing stock for the benefit of the tenants.

It was noted that this was the second year of the new regime under which the Council's housing revenue account was self-financing, with the 2013/14 budget adjusted in the light of the latest information of the outcomes in 2012/13. Members welcomed continued investment in providing additional affordable housing and also in maintaining the current housing stock to a high standard.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the Housing Revenue Account budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of Report C to the Cabinet be agreed;*
- (b) *That from 1 April 2013, an average increase in rents of 4.1% from the average 2012/13 rent level be agreed, in accordance with rent restructuring guidelines;*
- (c) *That from 1 April 2013, an increase of 2.2% in hostel service charges be agreed;*
- (d) *That from 1 April 2013, an increase of 0.5% in sheltered housing service charges be agreed;*
- (e) *That from 1 April 2013, an increase of 40 pence per week in garage rents (plus VAT for garages let to non-Council tenants) be agreed; and*

- (f) *That a Housing Capital Programme of £13.835m be agreed for 2013/14, as set out in Appendix 2 of Report C to the Cabinet.*

Action: Dave Brown

61. THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – ANNUAL BUDGET 2013/14 (REPORT D).

Further to minute 53 (16 January 2013), the Cabinet considered updated proposals for the medium term financial plan, but was advised that the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2013/14 was yet to be received.

The medium term financial plan included the provision of funding to town and parish councils to compensate for the loss of income caused by the reduction in the council tax base under the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It was hoped that this would encourage local councils not to increase their Council Tax in 2013/14. This contribution would be reviewed in 2013 as part of the general review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Cabinet welcomed the proposal that Council Tax would not be increased, for the third year running, with the Council taking advantage of the government's freeze grant of £115,000 for 2 years. The Council was able to achieve a balanced budget, with the General Fund net budget requirement for 2013/14 at £19.156m, a reduction of £439,000 on the 2012/13 budget requirement.

The Cabinet also considered the capital programme and project works for 2013/14.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the 2013/14 budget make provision for a contribution of £403,000 to be made to town and parish councils, on the basis of an estimate of the Council Tax Reduction scheme caseload;*
- (b) *That site licence fees and service charges at Stillwater Park be increased by 2.6%, in line with RPI inflation;*
- (c) *That a General Fund Net Budget Requirement of £19,156,400 be agreed;*
- (d) *That the fees and charges for the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, as set out in Appendix B(ii) to Report D to the Cabinet be approved;*
- (e) *That a Band D Council Tax of £155.76 be agreed; and*
- (f) *That a Capital Programme (non-housing) of £7.406m be agreed for 2013/14.*

CHAIRMAN