

**4 DECEMBER 2013**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 4 December 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:**

G C Beck  
Mrs S Bennison  
S Clarke  
Mrs L C Ford  
A T Glass  
C J Harrison  
M R Harris

**Councillors:**

Mrs A J Hoare  
Mrs M E Lewis  
J Penwarden  
A W Rice  
Mrs A M Rostand  
Mrs C Ward  
J G Ward

**Also In Attendance:**

Mr M Ackerman, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representative.

**Officers Attending:**

D Yates, J Mascall, R Jackson, Miss J Debnam, C Elliott, Mrs L Kmet, G Miles, Miss G O'Rourke and S Williams.

**38. MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

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

**40. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**41. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTIONS AND DISCOUNTS 2014/15 (REPORT A).**

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the task and finish working group that had been established to review the local scheme for council tax reductions and discounts in the light of experience during the first year of operation. The review took account of the anticipated withdrawal of transitional funding from the Government. Consultations had been held with the public and with precepting authorities, and the comments received were set out in the report.

A number of options had been considered and, for the longer term, in order to indicate the Council's aspiration to move towards a 20% minimum contribution from everyone except pensioners and vulnerable persons, the task and finish group had advocated increasing the minimum contribution, this year, to 10%, from the 8.5% that applied under the transitional arrangements. A larger increase was rejected in recognition of the financial pressures already being felt by households on limited incomes.

The current discount scheme was working well and consequently no change was proposed.

**RESOLVED:**

That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet agrees that, if the Government withdraws the transitional grant from April 2014, the present Council Tax Reduction Scheme be revised for 2014/15 in respect of persons who are not pensioners and persons not regarded as vulnerable because paragraph 29(8) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Schemes) (England) Regulations 2012 does not apply (i.e. not persons entitled to certain disability payments), as follows:

- a. An Applicant for the Scheme whose home is in a council tax band higher than band D shall have their entitlement calculated as if their home were in band D; and
- b. The capital limit above which there is no entitlement shall be reduced from £16,000 to £6,000. Capital below £6,000 shall be disregarded; and
- c. The 'relevant percentage' in regulation 29(7) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Schemes) (England) Regulations 2012 shall be 90%, meaning that the minimum council tax contribution is 10%; and
- d. The Scheme document for 2013/14 shall be replaced with Appendix 5 of Report A to the Cabinet in order to give effect to the above three recommended changes.

**RECOMMENDED:**

*That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Council agrees that, if the Government withdraws the transitional grant from April 2014, the present Council Tax Reduction Scheme be revised for 2014/15 in respect of persons who are not pensioners and persons not regarded as vulnerable because paragraph 29(8) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Schemes) (England) Regulations 2012 does not apply (i.e. not persons entitled to certain disability payments), as follows:*

- a. An Applicant for the Scheme whose home is in a council tax band higher than band D shall have their entitlement calculated as if their home were in band D; and*
- b. The capital limit above which there is no entitlement shall be reduced from £16,000 to £6,000. Capital below £6,000 shall be disregarded; and*
- c. The 'relevant percentage' in regulation 29(7) of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Schemes) (England) Regulations 2012 shall be 90%, meaning that the minimum council tax contribution is 10%; and*
- d. The Scheme document for 2013/14 shall be replaced with Appendix 5 of Report A to the Cabinet in order to give effect to the above three recommended changes.*

Action: Glynne Miles

**42. THE COUNCIL TAX 2014/15 – SETTING THE TAX BASE (REPORT B).**

The Cabinet considered the Tax Base for 2014/15, which was an important step in setting the Council Tax payable for that period. The factors taken into account in the calculation of the tax base were set out in Report B to the Cabinet and a summary of the tax base in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 was attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

**RESOLVED:**

That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet agrees that:

- (a) The calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2014/15 be approved.
- (b) Pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2014/15 be as follows and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report B considered by the Cabinet.

<b>PARISH/TOWN</b>	<b>TAX BASE 14/15</b>
Ashurst & Colbury	907.7
Beaulieu	511.1
Boldre	1043.0
Bramshaw	342.1
Bransgore	1772.7

Breamore	175.3
Brockenhurst	1837.4
Burley	771.5
Copythorne	1195.4
Damerham	225.3
Denny Lodge	147.2
East Boldre	379.4
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	592.0
Exbury & Lepe	108.9
Fawley	4445.4
Fordingbridge	2189.8
Godshill	220.5
Hale	257.9
Hordle	2341.3
Hyde	516.0
Hythe & Dibden	7225.0
Lymington & Pennington	6789.3
Lyndhurst	1366.1
Marchwood	2046.2
Martin	188.5
Milford on Sea	2738.4
Minstead	361.8
Netley Marsh	807.3
New Milton	10137.9
Ringwood	5058.4
Rockbourne	163.7
Sandleheath	273.7
Sopley	285.2
Sway	1655.1
Totton & Eling	9156.2
Whitsbury	99.4
Woodgreen	249.1
<b>Whole District</b>	<b>68581.2</b>

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Council agrees that:***

- (a) The calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2014/15 be approved.***
- (b) Pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2014/15 be as follows and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report B considered by the Cabinet.***

<b>PARISH/TOWN</b>	<b>TAX BASE</b>
	<b>14/15</b>
<b>Ashurst &amp; Colbury</b>	<b>907.7</b>
<b>Beaulieu</b>	<b>511.1</b>
<b>Boldre</b>	<b>1043.0</b>
<b>Bramshaw</b>	<b>342.1</b>
<b>Bransgore</b>	<b>1772.7</b>
<b>Breamore</b>	<b>175.3</b>
<b>Brockenhurst</b>	<b>1837.4</b>
<b>Burley</b>	<b>771.5</b>
<b>Copythorne</b>	<b>1195.4</b>
<b>Damerham</b>	<b>225.3</b>
<b>Denny Lodge</b>	<b>147.2</b>
<b>East Boldre</b>	<b>379.4</b>
<b>Ellingham, Harbridge &amp; Ibsley</b>	<b>592.0</b>
<b>Exbury &amp; Lepe</b>	<b>108.9</b>
<b>Fawley</b>	<b>4445.4</b>
<b>Fordingbridge</b>	<b>2189.8</b>
<b>Godshill</b>	<b>220.5</b>
<b>Hale</b>	<b>257.9</b>
<b>Hordle</b>	<b>2341.3</b>
<b>Hyde</b>	<b>516.0</b>
<b>Hythe &amp; Dibden</b>	<b>7225.0</b>
<b>Lymington &amp; Pennington</b>	<b>6789.3</b>
<b>Lyndhurst</b>	<b>1366.1</b>
<b>Marchwood</b>	<b>2046.2</b>
<b>Martin</b>	<b>188.5</b>
<b>Milford on Sea</b>	<b>2738.4</b>
<b>Minstead</b>	<b>361.8</b>
<b>Netley Marsh</b>	<b>807.3</b>
<b>New Milton</b>	<b>10137.9</b>
<b>Ringwood</b>	<b>5058.4</b>
<b>Rockbourne</b>	<b>163.7</b>
<b>Sandleheath</b>	<b>273.7</b>
<b>Sopley</b>	<b>285.2</b>
<b>Sway</b>	<b>1655.1</b>
<b>Totton &amp; Eling</b>	<b>9156.2</b>
<b>Whitsbury</b>	<b>99.4</b>
<b>Woodgreen</b>	<b>249.1</b>
<b>Whole District</b>	<b>68581.2</b>

Action: Glynne Miles

#### 43. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013-2017 (REPORT C).

Further to minute 35 (2 October 2013), the Cabinet considered revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan in the light of developing circumstances. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2014/15 was still unknown and forecasts were therefore based on previous Government announcements, which suggested that there would be a further reduction of £2.3 million in this Council's income over the next 3 years.

Progress had been made in developing 3 to 5 year revenue expenditure programmes, under each Portfolio, for future expenditure requirements for planned maintenance and replacement work on fixed assets; development projects and grants to third parties. A summary of the proposals was set out in Appendix B to Report C considered by the Cabinet.

A summary of the initial capital programme for 2014/15 to 2016/17 was set out in Appendix C to the report. Work was continuing to identify the potential programme, including the research being carried out by a task and finish group looking at the funding of major coastal protection works, following Government changes to the funding regime.

On 2 October 2013 (minute 33 refers) the Cabinet had also agreed, in principle, that a tapering transitional grant should be paid to town and parish councils to assist their financial planning to take account of the loss of income caused by the change from Council Tax Benefits to the Local Council Tax Reduction scheme, with its in-built reduction in Government funding. Consultations had subsequently been held with town and parish councils, and the proposed grants to each local Council, totalling £300,000 for 2014/15, were set out in Appendix D to the Report C.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That it be noted that the Medium Term Financial Plan has been updated as set out in Report C considered by the Cabinet; and
- (b) That Portfolio Holders be asked to review and report back to the February meeting of the Cabinet on recommended 3 year draft asset works, equipment replacement, development and capital programmes in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the provision of a Discretionary Grant of £300,000 to Town and Parish Councils in 2014/15 be approved, with the basis of individual distribution to be as set out in Appendix D to Report C considered by the Cabinet.***

Action: Bob Jackson/Kevin Green

**44. REVISED TREASURY BORROWING AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2013/14 (REPORT D).**

The Cabinet considered revisions to the Council's borrowing and investment strategy to take account of current market conditions. Allowing greater flexibility would broaden the range of counterparties with which the Council could do business and also improve yields.

In addition, following a review of Treasury Management Services, it had been concluded that it would be advantageous to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Hampshire County Council's Treasury Management Service. This arrangement should improve efficiency and the management of risk at this time of banking uncertainty. The Council would continue to set its own treasury strategy and its funds would continue to be separately identified. The County Council would only undertake the operational functions.

It was noted that a cautious approach would continue to be taken to the Council's borrowing and debt strategy, using reserves and cash flows as far as possible to minimise borrowing.

Overall, the officers would continue to take a pro-active and vigilant approach to the management of the Council's finances.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That each of the key elements of the Treasury Management Strategy, as set out below, and in more detail in Report D to the Cabinet, be approved:***

- (i) The additional information in the borrowing strategy relating to sources of borrowing and debt rescheduling;***
- (ii) The revised Investment strategy relating to the ability to place deposits of up to £10m for up to 2 years (3 years for other local authorities and other public sector bodies) and the inclusion of counterparties with a long term credit rating of A-, as set out in Annex A to Report D to the Cabinet;***
- (iii) The revision of the use of non-specified investment instruments, as set out in Annex B to Report D to the Cabinet;***
- (iv) The revised reporting requirements; and***
- (v) The strategy for financial derivatives.***

**45. NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN (REPORT E).**

The Cabinet considered a revised Local Enforcement Plan, following public consultations on a draft document. The revised plan took account of new National Planning Practice Guidance, including "Ensuring Effective Enforcement", which was expected to supersede current Circular 10/97 on this issue. The draft plan had been subject to consultation over the summer and had been amended in response to some of the comments received. Members welcomed the Plan, which reflected current practices, and was much clearer about when the Council would take action, what nature that action may take, the timescales involved and, importantly, the reasons why the Council may decide not to take any action.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the draft Local Enforcement Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to Report E considered by the Cabinet, be approved and adopted.***

**46. ICT STRATEGY (REPORT F).**

The Cabinet considered the ICT Strategy to cover the period 2014-2019, as set out in Report F to the Cabinet. Members were advised of the projects which had been carried out under the current Strategy, for the period 2009-2013, which had largely been directed towards the implementation of the office optimisation programme.

There were no major technology or information systems that required to be updated over the next Strategy period. The emphasis would therefore be refocused towards the maintenance and security of systems, while developments in technology and operating opportunities would be kept under close review to ensure the Council continued to make the most appropriate use of ICT and to meet changing expectations from the public about modes of interaction.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the ICT strategy for the period 2014 – 2019, as set out in Report F to the Cabinet, be approved.***

**47. PLANNING FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT (REPORT G).**

The Cabinet was advised that the Department for Work and Pensions had indicated that they had a growing expectation that local government would play a significant role in delivering Universal Credit. In addition, there was no doubt that the proposed changes would have a significant impact on the Council in its roles as a payer of benefits that will be amalgamated into the Universal Credit; as a provider of social housing; as an employer and as a community leader. As yet there was no clarity with respect to the timetable for implementation, or the role that was expected from local government, although a new framework document, that was expected shortly, was expected to give more information. Consequently, it was an opportune time to start to plan for the introduction of Universal Credit. While it was important that the Council was properly prepared, in a timely manner, it was also important that resources were not wasted on work that was, ultimately, abortive. The Cabinet considered that it would be prudent to start the planning process and concurred with the proposed establishment of a project board to take this work forwards. In addition, a number of key workstreams had been identified to structure the necessary activity. These would be delivered by a Project Team, chaired by the Head of Housing and Customer Services, drawing in expertise from other service areas and partner organisations as necessary.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That a Project Board be established to oversee the Council's response to the implementation of Universal Credit, comprised of the Housing and Communities and Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holders, a member of the Executive Management Team and the Head of Housing and Customer Services.
- (b) That Members note the contents of Report G to the Cabinet and that a presentation on this issue be arranged before a Council meeting, at an appropriate later date.

Action: Glynne Miles



**48. OUTSIDE BODY REPRESENTATION.**

**RESOLVED:**

That, in light of the resignation of Councillor Woods as this Council's representative on the Road Safety Council for the central Hampshire area, Cllr Puttock (the current deputy representative) be appointed as this Council's representative with Cllr Glass as the Deputy representative

CHAIRMAN

(CB041213)