

5 FEBRUARY 2014

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 5 February 2014.

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

Councillors:

p Mrs D M Brooks
p Mrs J L Cleary

Councillors:

ap F P Vickers
p C A Wise

In Attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs D E Andrews
G C Beck
Mrs S Bennison
S Clarke
Ms L C Ford
A T Glass
C J Harrison

Councillors:

Mrs A J Hoare
Mrs P Jackman
J Penwarden
L R Puttock
A W Rice
A J Swain
P R Woods

Also In Attendance:

Mrs A Murphy, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representative

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascal, D Brunton, Miss J Debnam, G Miles, Miss G O'Rourke, C Read, Ms L Upton and Ms K Williams

57. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 January 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

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

59. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

60. CAR PARKING CHARGES 2014 (REPORT A).

The Cabinet noted that, as part of the annual budget preparation process, the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder had concluded that, in order to assist local businesses and residents during the current difficult economic climate, it would be inappropriate to change any of the charges for car parking at this time. Consequently, the draft amendment Order which had been advertised in 2013 should not be confirmed.

RECOMMENDED:

That the draft District of New Forest (Off-Street Parking Places) (Amendment) Order 2013 be not confirmed and that parking charges remain at present levels.

Action: John Bull

61. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND HOUSING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME (REPORT B).

The Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account budget, together with the proposed public sector capital programme, for 2014/15. They were advised that the Housing Policy Focus Group had concluded that, while an average rent increase of 5.73% might be thought to be high, it still represented good value and allowed the Council to continue to invest in their housing stock; to provide additional homes and to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. The 5.73% increase was required to comply with government rent restructuring guidelines. The proposed increase in service charges continued to be calculated on the basis of achieving full cost recovery from users of the service.

The Cabinet was advised of the key variations that had been taken into account in setting the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2014/15. A number of unexpected variances had occurred during the current financial year, leading to an increase in the Housing Revenue Account reserve balance. In order to finance future new build projects and property acquisitions it was therefore proposed that a working balance of £1 million should be retained in the Housing Revenue Account reserve, with the excess, estimated at £5.652 million, transferred to a new reserve held specifically for new build and acquisitions.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the Housing Revenue Account budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report B to the Cabinet, be agreed;***
- (b) *That, from 7 April 2014, an average increase in rents of 5.73% from the average 2013/14 rent level be agreed, in accordance with rent restructuring guidelines;***

- (c) *That, from 7 April 2014, an increase of 2% in hostel service charges be agreed;*
- (d) *That, from 7 April 2014, an increase of 2% in sheltered housing service charges be agreed;*
- (e) *That, from 7 April 2014, an increase of 50 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 £13.078m, as set out in paragraph 6.1 of Report B to the Cabinet, be agreed for 2014/15.*

62. THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013-2017 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2014-15 (REPORT C).

Following the receipt of the Local Government finance settlement for 2014/15, with an indicative allocation for 2015/16, the Cabinet considered revisions to the medium term financial plan for the period 2013-2017. The settlement was slightly better than had been anticipated, mainly from an additional £365,000 under the new homes bonus as a result of work in this District to bring long term empty properties back into use. Government grant funding would however continue to reduce, with the total reduction over the next 2 years anticipated to be £1,161,000, which was 11.9% of the grant received in 2012/13.

The measures taken within 2013/14 to secure further efficiencies and constrain costs had allowed the development of a budget for 2014/15 that retained the current level of Council Tax, which would remain unchanged for the fifth year in succession.

Further work was continuing to identify savings to meet the anticipated funding gap of £1.375 million for 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the details of the Local Government finance settlement for 2014-15 and indicative amounts for 2015-16, as set out in Report C to the Cabinet, be noted;
- (b) That the latest General Fund Revenue Budget position, as set out in Section 3 of Report C to the Cabinet, be approved;
- (c) That the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2013-17 be updated, as set out in Report C to the Cabinet, to include the budget revenue requirements set out in Appendix 4 to the Report; and

RECOMMENDED:

- (d) *That the Net Budget Requirement in 2014 -15 be £18,630,410, as set out in Appendix 6 to Report C to the Cabinet;*
- (e) *That the Band D Council Tax for 2014 -15 shall be £155.76;*
- (f) *That the site licence fees and service charges at Stillwater Park be increased by 3.2%, in line with RPI inflation;*

- (g) *That General Fund Capital Programme funding of up to £8.080 million, including potential new items, as set out in Appendix 8 to Report C to the Cabinet, be approved;*
- (h) *That each of the Prudential Indicators, the Limits for 2014/15 to 2016/17 and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 9 to Report C to the Cabinet, be approved and adopted.*

63. PAYMENT CARD INDUSTRY DATA SECURITY STANDARD POLICY (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered a new policy for the processing of payments by cards, to comply with the external Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard Policy, as attached as Appendix 1 to Report D to the Cabinet, be approved, and that the policy be published on the Intranet and communicated to all relevant officers.

64. ALLOCATION OF DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTIONS (REPORT E).

The Cabinet considered proposals for the expenditure of monies, collected through Section 106 agreements, on public open space and transportation projects within the District. This followed the introduction of new processes in 2012/13 which had promoted the development of projects, in consultation with local ward councillors and the town or parish council, with the objective of using all the money held within the next 2 to 3 years. Consultation meetings held in the autumn 2013 had developed an agreed list of fully developed projects for inclusion in the programme for 2014/15 (Category A Projects) together with a list of projects that either needed further development, or where there was currently insufficient funding available to proceed (Category B projects).

Members were advised of progress on projects that had been approved for implementation during the current financial year, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the list of projects set out in Appendix 1 of Report D to the Cabinet be approved; with those projects within Category A, contained in table (i) of Appendix 1, totalling £1,220,426.09, included in the capital programme for 2014/15; and the expenditure of £10,000 approved for design and feasibility work relating to Category B;
- (b) That the Head of Planning and Transportation, in conjunction with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, be authorised to approve variations of up to 10% of the currently identified allocation;

- (c) That the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder as necessary on key decisions, be authorised to approve any project within Project List B of Appendix 1 to Report D to the Cabinet, should the scheme be developed during the course of the year and/or funding become available, providing the cost of the allocation does not exceed that already listed; and
- (d) That the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder as necessary on key decisions, be authorised to make such amendments as they deem appropriate to the approved project lists and included within the 2014/15 budget. These amendments to be reported to the Cabinet throughout the year via financial monitoring reports.

Action: Dean Brunton

65. DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS.

RESOLVED:

That with effect from 14 February 2014 all powers previously delegated to the Head of Customer and Financial Services and to the Head of Housing be delegated to the Head of Housing and Customer Services.

Action: Jan Debnam

CHAIRMAN