

**4 FEBRUARY 2015**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 4 February 2015.

- 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 Bennison  
S Clarke  
Ms L C Ford  
A T Glass  
M R Harris  
C J Harrison  
Mrs A J Hoare

**Councillors:**

Mrs P Jackman  
Mrs M E Lewis  
J Penwarden  
L R Puttock  
A J Swain  
Mrs C Ward  
R A Wappet  
J G Ward  
P R Woods

**Also In Attendance:**

Mr P Woodroof, Housing Policy and Report Focus Group Representative.

**Officers Attending:**

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall, D Brunton, Miss J Debnam, C Elliott, G Miles, Miss G O'Rourke, Mrs J Stainer and Mrs K Williams

**Also Attending:**

Ms D Wyatt – for minute 57.

**55. MINUTES.****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

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

**57. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

Ms Wyatt addressed the meeting to suggest that the Council was failing to protect the most vulnerable people in the community by increasing rents and service charges while freezing the Council Tax charge; and also by failing to pay all its employees the living wage. She also considered that the Council was not directing sufficient investment towards providing additional council homes.

**58. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND HOUSING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME 2015/16 (REPORT A).**

The Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account budget and Housing Public Sector Capital Programme for 2015/16. They noted the comments, in support of the proposals, from the Housing Policy Focus Group, representing the tenants. The proposed rent increase of 2.2% complied with the government's guideline increase of CPI +1%; while the increase in hostel and older persons' service charges continued to seek full recovery of the costs from those benefitting from the service. These increases were the lowest for 5 years, with council rents comparing favourably with surrounding authorities, registered social landlords and the private sector.

The Cabinet was advised of key variations to income and expenditure in the revenue budgets for 2015/16. In accordance with the policy introduced in 2014 it was proposed to continue to hold a working balance of £1 million in the Housing Revenue Account, allowing any surplus to be transferred to the acquisitions/development reserve.

The Capital Programme continued to take advantage of the HRA self-financing system, with a capital programme for 2015/16 of £12.483 million. The new build/acquisitions programme was anticipated to deliver 43 new properties in 2014/15, which would offset the 30 properties expected to be sold under the new Right-to-Buy arrangements. Some 100 additional properties had been acquired since the introduction of the self-financing system. A major scheme was also proposed for the North Milton Estate, within the 4 year spending programme, with £4.410 million expenditure on new build and £1.928 million on environmental enhancements.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) ***That the Housing Revenue Account budget, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report A to the Cabinet, be approved including, from 6 April 2015:***
- i) an average increase in rents of 2.2% from the average 2014/15 rent level, in accordance with government guidelines;***
  - ii) an increase of 2.2% in hostel service charges;***
  - iii) an increase of 2.2% in sheltered housing service charges; and***
  - iv) no increase in garage rents; and***
- (b) ***That the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as set out in Section 6 of Report A to the Cabinet, be approved including:***
- i) The 2015/16 Housing Capital Programme of £12.483m, as set out in paragraph 6.1 of Report A to the Cabinet; and***
  - ii) The North Milton Estate new build/environmental enhancements project (£6.068 million).***

**59. THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND ANNUAL BUDGET 2015-16 AND COUNCIL TAX 2015/16 (REPORT B).**

Further to the last consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan (minute 51, 7 January 2015 refers), the budget allocation process had been completed. Updated figures, together with budget changes identified since that meeting, were set out in appendices 1 to 6 to Report B. Members were advised that final notification of the settlement figure had now been received and there were no changes.

A balanced budget had been achieved for 2015/16, with Council Tax unchanged for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in succession.

The General Fund net requirement for 2015/16 was £18.327 million, which was £303,000 less than the 2014/15 budget requirement. The financial position beyond next year remained unclear but the trend of financial austerity was likely to continue, leading to continuous review processes to identify further savings and efficiencies. A contingency plan was in the process of development to ensure the Council continued to provide its front line services.

The capital programme for 2015/16 totalled £6.033 million, as set out in more detail in Appendix 6 to the report.

Members also considered the various prudential indicators that must be approved each year with respect to the capital programme.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That there is a General Fund Net Budget Requirement in 2015/16 of £18,327,040, as set out in Appendix 5 of Report B to the Cabinet, including the Business Development and Third Party Grant schemes set out in Appendix 4;*
- (b) *That the site licence fees and service charges at Stillwater Park be increased by 2.3%, in line with RPI inflation;*
- (c) *That the Band D Council Tax for 2015/16 shall be £155.76;*
- (d) *That the General Fund Capital Programme for 2015/16 of £6.033m, as set out in Appendix 6 of Report B to the Cabinet, be approved; and*
- (e) *That each of the Prudential Indicators, the Limits for 2015/16 to 2017/18 and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 7 of Report B to the Cabinet, be approved and adopted.*

**60. ALLOCATION OF DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTIONS (REPORT C).**

Following a further series of meetings with local ward councillors and representatives of town and parish councils during the autumn, the Cabinet considered further proposals for the allocation of developers' contributions to fund open space and transportation projects to benefit communities in the vicinity of those developments that had taken place. A degree of flexibility had been included, with the setting of priorities, to ensure that all receipts could be spent, but should some expected income not, in the event, be forthcoming, the programme could be adjusted.

Members thanked the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder and the officers for their work in developing projects and priorities that were already making a difference to the quality of life in communities and would bring forwards further, essential, investment over the coming months.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the list of projects at Appendix 1 of Report C to the Cabinet be approved for inclusion in the capital programme from 2015/16 with a total programme of £3,732,000, of which £2,239,000 to be included in the 2015/16 budget and £1,493,000 in the 2016/17 budget;
- (b) That the list of projects already approved, as set out in Appendix 2 of Report C to the Cabinet, together with the amounts remaining, be noted;
- (c) That the Head of Planning and Transportation, in conjunction with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make amendments to the allocated amounts within 10% above those currently identified;

- (d) That the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder be authorised to make such amendments as they deem appropriate to the approved project lists (within the constraints of the pooling rules) included within the Council's budget. These items to be reported to the Cabinet throughout the year via the financial monitoring reports; and
- (e) 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 included within the capital programme. These items to be reported to the Cabinet throughout the year via the financial monitoring reports.

Action: Dean Brunton

#### 61. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (REPORT D).

The Cabinet considered a number of policy documents that must be approved for the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy on 6 April 2015, together with an initial list of projects.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That, insofar as they are empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet approves the following policy documents, attached as appendices A-E to Report D to the Cabinet:
- Regulation 123 list
  - Exceptional Circumstances Relief
  - Discretionary Charitable Relief
  - Instalment Policy
  - Payment in Kind Policy
- and approves the delegations as set out in Appendix F to Report D to the Cabinet;
- (b) That the Head of Planning and Transportation in conjunction with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder be authorised to make editing and clarification changes to the documents attached as Appendices A-D to Report D to the Cabinet in preparing them for publication; and
- (c) That, insofar as they are empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet authorise the Head of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation to approve a policy document enabling the Council to grant discretionary social housing relief.

Action: Dean Brunton

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- (a) *That, insofar as they are empowered to do so by law, the Council approves the policy documents attached as appendices A-E to Report D to the Cabinet for:*

- *Regulation 123 list*
- *Exceptional Circumstances Relief*
- *Discretionary Charitable Relief*
- *Instalment Policy*
- *Payment in Kind Policy*

*and approves the delegations as set out in Appendix F to Report D to the Cabinet; and*

- (b) *That, insofar as they are empowered to do so by law, the Council authorise the Head of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation to approve a policy document enabling the Council to grant discretionary social housing relief.*

CHAIRMAN

(CB040215)