

26 APRIL 1999

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on Monday 26 April 1999.

- p Cllr Mrs A M Howe - Chairman
- p Cllr F R Harrison - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p K E Austin
- p Mrs O A M Badland
- p S Bailey
- p P A Baker
- p Mrs P D Baker
- p Major C Beeton MBE
- p Mrs C A Bianchi
- p E R Bowring
- p D S Burdle
- p J E Coles
- p Miss S A Cooke
- p M R Cox
- p D E Cracknell
- p W F Croydon
- p B D Dash
- G Dawson
- p J J Dawson
- p Miss P A Drake
- p K W Drew
- B C Earwicker
- p A S Emery
- p R K Goodridge
- p W J Greer
- p R C H Hale
- p L E Harris
- p D Harrison
- p S A Hayes
- p J M Hoy

Councillors:

- p J A G Hutchins JP
- p M R Jones
- p M J Kendal
- p G N D Locock
- e Mrs B M Maynard
- p N D M McGeorge
- p Mrs M McLean
- e S M Noel
- p R F Orton
- p P G Pearce-Smith
- p A W Rice TD
- p B Rickman
- p Miss G M Rickus CBE
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- e D N Scott
- p Lt Col M J Shand
- p S A Shepherd
- p Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs L P Snashall
- p G Spikins
- p Mrs J K Vernon-Jackson MBE JP DL
- e J Waddington
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p Dr M N Whitehead
- p Mrs D Wilson
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

Ms J Bateman, N Gibbs, K Ireland, I B Mackintosh, Ms E Malcolm, Mrs P Higgins, Mrs R Rutins and T R Simpson

1. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 1999, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the name of Councillor C G Ramsden being deleted from the list of those Councillors present.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) Mrs Henrietta Avery

The Chairman reported with regret the death earlier this month of Mrs Henrietta Avery.

Mrs Avery had been a District Councillor from 1974 to 1978 and had also been a member of the predecessor Lymington Borough Council from 1972 until 1974.

During her period as a New Forest District Councillor she served on the Environmental Services and Housing Committees as well as representing the Council on numerous outside bodies. In particular, she served on the Lymington Citizens Advice Bureau Management Committee from 1974 to 1978. Mrs Avery had a special interest in education and was involved with Arnewood School, New Milton from 1975 to 1979 and Lymington County Junior School from 1977 to 1981.

Mrs Avery was 91 years of age.

(b) Mr Peter Gibbs

The Chairman also reported with regret, after a long illness, the death on 5 March 1999 of ex-Councillor Mr Peter Gibbs.

Mr Gibbs was first elected as a District Councillor in 1979 for a four year term and served for a further term from 1987 to 1995. He had been a member of Environmental Services, Leisure Services and Housing Committees and had had a special interest in the homeless.

He served as a Parish Councillor on Hythe and Dibden Parish Council for 28 years and was their longest serving Councillor ever, only giving up because of his ill health. He worked for many years at Esso, Fawley.

He is survived by a wife, two daughters and a son.

Members stood in silence to the memory of Mrs Henrietta Avery and Mr Peter Gibbs.

(c) Childsafe Event 1999

The Chairman was pleased to announce that sponsorship for the Childsafe 1999 event had been secured from Esso Petroleum and Exxon Chemicals at Fawley. Their generous donation of £3000 would pay for this year's event.

Childsafe is a multi -agency initiative to promote safety, health and personal security amongst children. An annual event was held in June at Foxlease in Lyndhurst over 5 days. A wide range of local organisations take part.

Over the period some 700 children aged 9-10 from 14 schools attend and go through action based scenarios.

Extensive evaluation had shown that the event was appreciated by the children, teachers and providers of the scenarios, most importantly the safety messages were being retained.

The District Council were joint organisers with the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service of the Hampshire Education Service as part of the Health for All initiative.

(d) **Waterside Credit Union**

The Chairman was also pleased to report that the Waterside Credit Union had been informed by the Registrar of Friendly Societies on Friday 23 April that it was to be registered as a Credit Union. The District Council had been supporting the development of the Credit Union along with the Waterside Parish Councils, the Dibden Allotment Charity and the Council of Voluntary Service. A lot of hard work had taken place to establish this body, principally by the volunteers who ran the Credit Union, but also by the Development Committee, Chaired by Ros Cooper, who have guided its establishment. It was hoped that eventually there would be other similar Unions to cover the whole of the New Forest area.

(e) **Last Meeting of the Municipal Year**

The Chairman commented that this was not only the last Council meeting of the municipal year but also the last meeting of this particular Council.

The Chairman indicated that she had very much enjoyed being Chairman for this past year, and extended her personal thanks and best wishes to all those Members who were not seeking re-election on May 6. Many, she felt, would still continue working for the New Forest District behind the scenes.

To all those Members who were standing again the Chairman wished the best of luck in the forthcoming elections. The Chairman commented that whatever the future might hold she felt Members would always have the best interests of the New Forest area at heart which was what made it so special.

The Chairman invited those who felt they wished to say a few words to do so.

A number of Members and the Managing Director then spoke in a similar vein.

(f) **Mr Derek Gurney**

The Chairman reported that Mr Derek Gurney, Director of Finance and Administration was unwell and would be off work for some time. Members sent their best wishes to Mr Gurney and looked forward to his return.

3. OPEN DEBATE.

Councillor Mrs A M Howe declared an interest as a Council appointed representative on Age Concern, Hampshire. In accordance with Standing Order 23(2) she remained in the Chair, took part in the discussion and voted.

The Chairman introduced the public open debate item and informed the Council that the topic chosen, "International Year of Older Persons 1999" had been suggested by Mrs Ruth Wenban-Smith of Lymington United Nations Association.

Mrs Ruth Wenban-Smith opened the debate and commented that the world was moving towards a society for all ages and initiatives. The International Year of the Older Person did not stop at the end of the year but aimed to build a foundation for work to continue. There was a tendency to regard older people as a burden when they should be considered as an asset, particularly by employers.

Mrs Wenban-Smith referred to a newspaper headline indicating that the older people were getting younger, fitter and richer. There was a great deal of unpaid voluntary work carried out by older people and Mrs Wenban-Smith gave the example of the Lymington Community Centre where there are approximately 100 affiliated organisations mainly run by volunteer older people. Mrs Wenban-Smith commented that older people certainly did not want to be categorised together as "the elderly". 1999 would focus attention on the needs of the older person which should then be carried forward and improved.

Mr Chris Perry spoke as the Director, Age Concern, Hampshire.

Mr Perry commented that the Audit Commission report "Coming of Age" highlighted increasing longevity as one of the greatest achievements of the Twentieth Century but it was rarely recognised as such. People were now fitter and had better environmental conditions and could spend up to forty years in retirement.

The "Debate of the Age" was one of the largest public consultation exercises ever undertaken and hoped to target an audience of 80% with 60% actually taking part. The debate highlighted the impact of demographic change by the year 2020 and that society would need to reflect that one in five of the population could be over retirement age.

Mr Perry said that it was important not to over lay disability with handicap. Many older persons might feel they had a "handicap" but this did not stop them remaining a valued member of society.

The Royal Commission on long term care showed that many older people felt that the national insurance contributions they paid during their working lives should completely fund medical care in their older lives. This was highlighted by the fact that an illness such as Cancer would be covered by the National Health Service whereas costs to treat Alzheimer's Disease would not necessarily be covered.

In 1960 it was noted that there were four people of working age to support each retired person. In 1999 there will be only two. Mr Perry pointed out that there was a wealth of experience that older people could contribute to society and society could not afford to ignore this.

Mr Frank Wilson then spoke as the Chief Officer of New Forest Voluntary Service Council.

Mr Wilson fully endorsed the points made by the previous speakers in the debate, particularly those in relation to being part of an international family. Mr Wilson commented that Age Concern considered a person over fifty years of age to be an older person. Many young people had no concept of the fact that older people used to be just like them. The International Year of the Older Person gave an important opportunity to educate young people in the principles of honour and respect and what the older person could contribute to society, culture and the economy in general. Mr Wilson commented that in the New Forest the vast majority of people working in the voluntary sector were beyond retirement age and yet continued to give back to society.

Mr Horrill, Honorary President, Age Concern, Waterside spoke specifically about the day care contract for the Cussens Day Centre. Mr Horrill reported that the day care contract had expired at the end of March, 1999 and had yet to be renewed. The staff consequently felt very insecure and Mr Horrill was concerned that this would affect the volunteers and the clients at the centre. In particular, as the contract had not been let, there was a vacancy for a cook and in view of the circumstances this post was not currently being filled. Catering was now being delivered from another centre which was resulting in a lower level of service to clients.

Mr G Howe, Age Concern, commented that the debate had all been very relevant and in his view the most important word was dignity. Older people were the same as others and wanted their pensions to give them a decent standard of living without having to rely on handouts. Mr Howe expressed the view that the Government should enhance pensions as a reward for social and society work carried out by retired older people. Older people wanted to be recognised as members of the same society and not citizens shunted into the sidings of life.

There were no members of the public with opposing views. Members of the Council then entered into the debate. Members noted that some older people needed more support than others and this raised implications and issues for the Council to consider.

It was proposed and seconded that in the interests of the clients, as a matter of urgency, Hampshire County Council be urged to finalise the contract arrangements for the Cussens Day Centre; and that the new Council be asked to participate in Age Concerns Debate of the Age; examine and respond to the Royal Commission on long term care; be alive to the health needs of older people in the district through the Health Improvement Programme, in particular to assess local needs and to encourage the support systems for older people to remain in their own homes.

Members expressed support for the proposal. They commented that in many societies people, at the age of 50, were well past the average life expectancy. Members noted that in the Country it was generally only in the last 15 years of life that people suffered increasing disability. Members expressed concern over the way in which the Health Service and in particular some general practitioners treated older people. However, it was noted that care of the elderly was one of the five priorities in the Health Service.

A member commented that it was important to encourage older people to keep mentally active and it was proposed and seconded that the encouragement of life time learning and activity should be added to the proposal before the Council.

Members also noted that there were a certain group of people in the 45-60 age group who were unemployed and had no pension. It was noted that at age 50 people should be in line for re-employment not retirement and that "ageism" in employment was an increasing problem. It was proposed and seconded that the Council should seek from the Government, as part of its new legislation on discrimination in the workplace, an assurance that ageism would not be tolerated, including prohibition of age limits in advertisements.

It was noted that many older people had a fear of crime and would not go out after dark to take part in activities such as evening classes. These concerns were being addressed under the new Crime and Disorder Strategy and members noted that it was important to ensure that older people did not continue to feel socially excluded. A member commented that it was unnecessary to compartmentalise individuals whether they be young people or old people and it was up to the individual in their own right to decide what they wished to do in life. The biggest problem in society was the break-up of families and support systems which no amount of legislation would resolve.

Mrs Wenban-Smith in summing up commented that it had been a very interesting debate in which she was pleased to have taken part.

Members recognised that this was the start of the Debate of the Age and in view of the large percentage of older people in the New Forest area, the needs of older people must be reflected in the Council's future strategies. After debate and, following amendments to the original motion, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

That this Council

- (a) In the interests of the clients, as a matter of urgency, urges Hampshire County Council to finalise the contract arrangements for the Cussens Day Centre; and
- (b) That the new Council be asked to:-
 - (i) Participate in Age Concern's Debate of the Age;
 - (ii) Examine and respond to the Royal Commission on long term care;

- (iii) Be alive to the health needs of older people in the district through the Health Improvement Programme, in particular to assess local needs and to encourage the support systems for older people to remain in their own homes;
- (iv) Encourage lifetime learning and activity; and
- (v) Seek from the Government, as part of its new legislation on discrimination in the workplace, an assurance that ageism will not be tolerated including prohibition of age limits in advertisements.

4. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 16 March and 20 April 1999. On the motion that the report be received it was:

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

5. DIRECT SERVICES CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 23 February 1999. On the motion that the report be received, it was

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 4 March 1999. On the motion that the report be received:

(a) **Contaminated Land**

The Chairman of the Committee agreed to write to Councillor Hoy with details of finance that would be available to New Forest District Council to deal with the remediation of contaminated land.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received

7. HOUSING COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 23 March 1999. On the motion that the report be received it was;

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

8. LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 9 March 1999. On the motion that the report be received it was:

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

9. PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 7 April and 21 April 1999. On the motion that the report be received:

(a) **Supplementary Planning Guidance: "Residential Design Guide for Rural Areas of the New Forest District".**

In considering the report the Chairman of the Committee drew members attention to the two month consultation period on the above guidance.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

10. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 7 April and 21 April 1999. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations be adopted:

(a) **Budgetary Control for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Expenditure 1998/99**

Councillor Kendal commented that the report had failed to mention a £150,000 of staff savings which had subsequently not been taken into account in the budget making process. Councillor Kendal indicated that this money together with an additional £271,000 resulting from an underestimate of interest from income and from committee savings should have been

included in the budget. Members discussed issues surrounding the budget and at 8.15 pm under Standing Order (14) (15)(b) Councillor Robinson moved that the question now be put.

This motion was voted on and carried.

It was then:

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

Note:

Councillor Wilson asked to be recorded as having abstained from the above decision.

11. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER NINE.

In accordance with Standing Order 9, Councillor Robinson asked the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee the following question:

“Given recent criticisms of the current administration of this Council by the MP for New Forest East, would the Leader remind the Council of the comments made by the District Auditor, and central Government Departments under both Conservative and Labour Governments, which commend the New Forest District Council over the past few years for its financial prudence and its overall competence of administration.”

The Chairman of the Committee replied:

“I thank the Councillor for giving me the opportunity to put the record straight in relation to the performance of the New Forest District Council and would point out that once again our local M.P. seems to be unaware of the true facts.

1998/99 has been a year in which the Council has built on the success of previous years including achieving further opportunities for income generation to reduce the District's Council Tax for the residents of the area.

In December 1998 Policy and Resources Committee received the annual management letter from the District Auditor. This, as Members should know, is the overall report on the way the Council is being run, the value for money it gives, and the probity of its operations. It is an independent external assessment, unbiased by politics.

When the District Auditor presents his report the leader of the Conservative Group is always invited to be attend and to the best of my recollection has been present at all the meetings . I am sure that Councillor Greer would have to agree that over the last four years the District Auditor has found nothing of significance to criticise and indeed has been very complimentary about the way this Council has been run.

Let me quote from some of his recent reports:-

“Overall the Council’s general financial standing is good. The forward looking projections should enable the Council to consider strategies to address future shortfalls in revenue spending.”

“The Authority continues to benefit from robust and innovative strategic financial planning and has maintained effective control over basic systems controls”

“The Council has made a good start in addressing Best Value Agenda and has identified areas of good practice”

“The Council’s tax collection costs are very low ... This represents a significant effort by the Council to reduce costs and the Council is to be commended for these results”

“The New Forest District Council has sound arrangements in place for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption”

These are but a few examples. Any Member can of course read the Management letters for themselves.

On an individual basis many of our services receive specific accolades or recognition from Government.

For example:-

In 1998 New Forest District Council achieved the Government target of 25% waste recycling and three quarters of the district is now covered by the Clear Sack Recycling Scheme;

The District Councils approach to tourism has been included as best practice in the Governments new National Tourism Strategy. NFDC have been applauded for our commitment to ensuring that the Council and the New Forest Tourism Association deliver the key themes outlined in our strategy.

The Government Office for the South East consider NFDC to be one of the best three Housing Authorities in the South East Region. They particularly comment on the Authority’s strategic approach, programme delivery and their levels of tenant participation.

The evidence clearly demonstrates financial prudence and overall competence of management and administration, not the picture Dr Lewis would have the public believe”.

Councillor Robinson asked the following supplementary question:

Would the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee care to comment on questions asked by Councillor Kendal in the previous debate.

The Chairman of the Committee responded that the estimates for 1999/2000 were based on figures available up to 31 December 1998.

The figure of £421,000, reported to Policy and Resources Committee on 7 April 1999 was the total variation between the revised budget and the current forecast for 1998/99 for the general fund.

This was made up as follows:

	£,000
Staff turnover savings	150
Increase in net interest earnings	75
Committees net savings	<u>196</u>
	<u>421</u>

In accordance with Standing Order 9; Councillor Mrs Vernon-Jackson asked the Chairman of the Central Services Committee the following question:

"I have read a leaflet telling me that heating bills for Appletree Court are £616,000. Is this true?"

The Chairman of the Committee replied:

"The Annual heating costs for Appletree Court are approximately £4,000 having been reduced, through effective energy management over the past three years, from around £4,900.

The figure of £616,000 that has been quoted is taken, I presume, from the Capital estimates for Central Services Committee. The figure, based on estimates prepared by the Council's Consultants, is the estimated cost of replacing the whole of the present heating system for Appletree Court which is constantly failing. Parts of the current heating system are 80 years old and date back to when the original house was built.

The Consultants have been asked to review their proposals, and examine alternative ways of heating that are more environmentally friendly".

Councillor Mrs-Vernon Jackson asked the following supplementary question:

"Would the Chairman of the Central Services Committee deplore the misinformation that has been promulgated in this way".

Council

26 APRIL 1999

The Chairman of the Committee agreed and responded that such questions did not assist the proper debate on energy efficiency within New Forest District Council.

CHAIRMAN

(clmins)