

17 JULY 2000

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 17 July 2000.

- p Cllr A W Rice TD - Chairman
- p Cllr Miss P A Drake - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- e Mrs S M Abernethy
- p K F Ault
- p K E Austin
- p E R Bowring
- p F J Bright
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p D S Burdle
- p W R Catt
- p J E Coles
- p D E Cracknell
- p P H Cummings
- e B D Dash
- p J J Dawson
- p W H Dow
- p T J Droogleever
- p L T Dunsdon
- p B C Earwicker
- p M H G Fidler
- p R L Frampton
- p Ms C F Gradidge
- p P C Greenfield
- p R C H Hale
- p L E Harris
- p F R Harrison
- p S A Hayes
- p J D Heron
- p Mrs M D Holding
- p Mrs A M Howe

Councillors:

- p J M Hoy
- p Mrs M Humber BA
- p J A G Hutchins JP
- p M J Kendal
- p M C Kidman
- p G N D Locock
- p Mrs B M Maynard
- p Mrs M McLean
- p G K Richardson
- p B Rickman
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- p B Rule
- p T M Russell
- p D N Scott
- p M J Shand
- p S A Shepherd
- p Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs L P Snashall
- e G Spikins
- p M H Thierry
- p D B Tipp
- p J Waddington
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p Mrs D Wood
- p C A Wise
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, N J Gibbs, K Ireland, Ms E Malcolm, C Malyon, Ms J Bateman, Ms G O'Rourke, Mrs R Rutins and T R Simpson.

9. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2000, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

10. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) **Councillor Danny Cracknell**

The Chairman reported with pleasure the appointment of Cllr Cracknell as first Town Mayor of Ringwood. Cllr Cracknell had represented Ringwood for many years and his service to the community was valued and second to none. The Vice-Chairman commented that there was no finer person to be the first time holder of this important community role.

The Council joined the Chairman in congratulating Cllr Cracknell.

(b) **Cllr Hale**

Members joined the Chairman in welcoming Cllr Hale back to the Council following his recent illness.

(c) **Queen's Birthday Honours**

The Chairman was pleased to announce the following local people who had all been recognised in the Queens Birthday Honours List:-

Palma Coggins of Lymington had been made an OBE for her services to the charity Victim Support. Mrs Coggins first joined the charity fifteen years ago in London where she and her husband used to live. She had been Chairman of the New Forest Branch of Victim Support for the past four years.

Sue Lopez had been made an MBE. Miss Lopez, the country's only female county coaching and development officer, based with Hampshire Football Association, was a leading light in women's football and a former international player. Miss Lopez from Dibden Purlieu, was only the second woman to gain the Football Association Advanced Licence Coaching Award in 1991.

Lizzie Vann a business woman from Bransgore, who ran a successful food company in Christchurch, had also been made an MBE for her services to the organic food industry. Ms Vann set up the specialist children's food company, 'Organix' nine years ago and it was now the country's third largest baby food company selling its products through major supermarket chains.

Keith Taylor, former Esso Chairman had been made a CBE for his services to the oil and gas industry. Mr Taylor from Boldre, was a Chemical Engineer when he joined the Esso Plant in Fawley in 1964, rising to become Chairman and Chief Executive of Esso UK in 1993.

Robert Hillier, Chairman of Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council, had been awarded the OBE for his outstanding service to the people and businesses of Hampshire over the past ten years, in training, development and business support.

As the Managing Director of Hillier Nurseries near Romsey, he became Chairman of Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council in 1994 and took over as Chairman of Business Link Hampshire in 1996.

Members joined the Chairman in congratulating these five local people on their awards.

(d) **100th Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother**

The Chairman showed members a scroll designed by the Council's Graphics Team which was to be sent to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on the occasion of her 100th Birthday.

Members noted the following wording that would appear on the scroll:-

'The Loyal and Dutiful Subjects in the District of New Forest humbly present to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, whom God preserve, their congratulations on the occasion of her 100th Birthday on Friday the 4th day of August two thousand and express their heartfelt desire that she may continue to enjoy good health and happiness'.

Members joined the Chairman in wishing Her Majesty a very happy 100th Birthday.

(e) **National Cycle Network**

The Chairman reported that on 21 June, the longest day, he had welcomed, at the Hythe Ferry, bicycle riders taking part in the longest ride.

The ride was to celebrate the opening of the first 5,000 miles of the National Cycle Network, which had been funded by a £43m lottery Millennium Commission Project.

The aim of the Project was to provide safe routes for cyclists, walkers and users of wheelchairs and it was hoped that the network would grow to 10,000 miles within the next five years.

The Chairman displayed a plaque that had been presented to the Council to celebrate the occasion.

(f) **'Perpetual Life' Collage**

The Chairman reported that he had been very pleased to welcome the Duchess of Wellington, as President of Age Concern Hampshire, to the District at the Cussens Day Centre in Hythe.

The Duchess had officially handed over a collage, displayed at the Council meeting, which had been made by the users of the Centre, who were residents of the Waterside area. The collage was a Millennium Project which had taken approximately 18 months to complete. The collage would be displayed at Appletree Court for two weeks and then move to Lymington and Hythe.

(g) **Bicycle Raffle**

The Chairman reported that, on 21 May whilst attending the Barnado's Annual New Forest Bike Ride at Ferny Crofts Scout Centre near Beaulieu, he was the lucky winner of First Prize in their grand draw – a 21 speed gentleman's mountain bike.

The Chairman had decided to raise more money by raffling the bike again for the Chairman's Charity.

Tickets were available from the Chairman's Secretary in the Chief Executive's Department and the draw would take place a week before Christmas 2000.

(h) **Mr Graham Tombs**

The Chairman was very pleased to report that Mr Graham Tombs, Head of Public Services, had been appointed to the Board of the Association for the Sustainable Use and Recovery of Resources in Europe (ASSURE).

Mr Tombs had been invited to join the Board in view of his work at a National level in the UK through Project Integra.

Members agreed this was a very prestigious appointment for a senior officer of the Council. The Chairman of the Environmental Services and Licensing Committee was pleased that the Council now had a representative voice at European level.

Members joined the Chairman in congratulating Mr Tombs. In particular, Cllr Brenda Smith praised Mr Tombs for his diligent work over the years in the field of waste management. She commented that he was a tremendous asset and members were proud to have officers of that calibre working for the Council.

11. BUSINESS SERVICES CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 16 June 2000.

On the motion that the report be received it was:-

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

12. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 13 June 2000.

On the motion that the report be received:-

(a) Boundary Between Bramshaw and Copythorne Parishes

In considering the report it was moved by Cllr Scott and seconded by Cllr Robinson that the report be referred back for further consideration. Members expressed concern that a request from three property owners in Wittensford to move the boundary between Bramshaw and Copythorne Parishes, in order to transfer their properties to Bramshaw Parish had been rejected. Some members expressed the view that the wishes of residents should be a primary consideration. It was noted that local residents had attended the committee meeting and had spoken on the matter. It was reported that the two Parish Council's concerned had different views on the request - one was in support and one was against. The Committee came to their decision after hearing the residents' case which had been presented at length.

The motion was voted on and was lost.

(b) Item 2 – Annual Employee Training Report

In response to a question it was noted that whilst some employees would be taken on through the New Deal Scheme this could not be a guarantee of future permanent employment.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

13. DIRECT SERVICES CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 23 January 2000. On the motion that the report be received.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE.

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 1, 8 and 26 June 2000.

On the motion that the report be received:-

(a) **Item 3 – Responsible Dog Ownership**

A member asked whether the Committee had considered the concerns of local vets in relation to the micro chipping service offered by Council's Dog Wardens.

It was reported that the issue had been discussed during consideration of the report and the committee had agreed that market forces should be allowed to apply. Dog owners should continue to have the choice of using either a local vet or the Dog Warden Services for micro-chipping.

(b) **Item 4 – Funding for the Employment of Technical Specialists to Complete a Close Circuit Television (CCTV) Review**

In response to a question relating to the appointment, remuneration and supervision of the proposed Neighbourhood Wardens, the Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee reported that there were still a number of outstanding questions in relation to these matters and a further report would be considered in due course by the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee. Neighbourhood Wardens would not take the place of Police but might replace or work in conjunction with traditional traffic wardens. Neighbourhood Wardens would be an adjunct to CCTV provision. The Vice-Chairman of the Committee agreed that a further detailed written response would be sent to the member.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

15. HOUSING COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 21 June 2000. In presenting the report he paid tribute to Cllr Wood for the excellent work she had carried out whilst Chairman of the Committee. His remarks were supported by Cllr Richardson who commented that as a Chairman, Cllr Wood had always been extremely courteous and helpful.

On the motion that the report be received:-

(a) **Item 2 – Quality and Choice – A Decent Home for All – The Housing Green Paper**

It was noted that whilst the Government were asking for the differentials between Council and Housing Association rents to be reduced over a 10 year period, a number of members expressed concern at the proposed Local Authority rent increases.

A member commented that there were now 20 people in bed and breakfast accommodation across the district. He enquired whether leased housing, particularly in the Ringwood area, was still under consideration.

The Chairman of the Committee replied that the provision of leased housing was actively under consideration and would be the subject of a report to the Committee as soon as possible. With regard to rent increases the Chairman reiterated that the Government wished to bring rents for comparable Housing Association and Council properties in line over the next 10 years. Capital improvements would depend on capital funds being available which should be financed by phased rent increases.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

16. LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 30 May 2000.

On the motion that the report be received:-

(a) **Item 1 – Grant Aid Fund Applications**

In reply to a question relating to the deferred grant for the Hampshire Village Hall Touring Scheme, the Chairman of the Committee stated that a report would be considered at the next meeting of the Leisure Services Committee.

(b) **Item 2 – Play Policy and Strategy Document 2000/2003**

In response to a question the Chairman of the Committee confirmed that the Play Policy was establishing pump priming and appropriate goals to enable organisations to become self financing in the long term.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

17. PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 31 May and 28 June 2000.

On the motion that the report be received:-

RESOLVED:

That subject to the substitution in Item 9 - Hythe Saltmarsh – Trial Use of Dredged Sediments, in paragraph 1 line 6 of the word 'chemical' for the word 'channel', the report be received.

18. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 5 July 2000.

On the motion that the report be received:-

(a) **Item 2 – Recommendations from Modernisation Working Party – 5 May and 30 June 2000**

In response to a question it was confirmed that the cabinet, when formerly constituted, would conduct its business in public.

(b) **Item 4 – MacPherson Report – Implications for the Council's Employees and Policies**

A member asked whether the agreed definition of a racist incident would be extended to other parts of the authority's activities.

It was noted that the report that had been considered was only relevant in terms of employment policies. There had been little flexibility in terms of the response.

(c) **Item 6 – Treasury Management Policy Statement**

A member expressed concern that there was no mention in the report of the need for socially responsible investment. It was reported that in this particular area the emphasis was on purely cash-based investments and the question of socially responsible share-dealing did not arise. However, the Council would consider the issue in the future in those areas where there was a degree of flexibility.

(d) **Item 8 – Financial Strategy 2001/2002 to 2004/2005**

A member commented that there was a real possibility of cuts in service and increases in Council Tax in the future and enquired how the budget planning process was being taken forward. Another member asked whether, in view of the suggestion by the Director of Finance that the Council Tax would need to be increased over the next four years, what arrangements were being made for a public consultation exercise.

In response it was reported that the Council's four year forward financial plan was, as usual at this stage in the year, based on broad spending patterns and until Government grant was known in December the Council Tax could not be set. In the light of suggested spending proposals for additional schemes over and above those already agreed, it was already obvious that there would either need to be cuts in service or an increase in Council Tax to fund new schemes.

- (e) Item 9 – Early Terminations of Employment 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000

A member enquired as to whether there would be a private minute available in the case of one of the early terminations. The Chairman of the Committee replied that there would be a further report to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations adopted.

19. QUESTION UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 9.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 9, Cllrs Scott and Tipp asked the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee the following question:-

- (a) “What are the costs to this Council of the Government initiatives on modernisation of local government so far?”

The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee replied:-

“It is unclear if the question refers to the whole issue of Local Government modernisation. If so then it encompasses such matters as best value and the introduction of electronic governance and the many issues affecting the day to day running of the authority and the costs will be virtually impossible to quantify.

If it refers specifically to the changes in the decision making process then the costs so far are limited to the arrangements for the Modernisation Working Party meetings; the appointment of a consultant and the undertaking of the first consultation exercise.

The budget provision for 2000/01 is:

£22,500 for members allowances (this figure is intended for increased allowances for the new cabinet and has therefore not yet been spent);

£25,000 for the consultation process of which £4,197 has been committed so far on the initial consultation leaflet and £490 on conducting the street survey; (further consultation arrangements are planned for later in the year.)

£1,700 on consultancy advice.”

- (b) “What is the best estimate of the future running costs of the new decision making structure of the Council compared with the present system?”

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee replied:-

“At this stage, apart from the costs outlined previously, there is no clear estimate of future running costs, as so many issues surrounding the whole modernising agenda remain unclear.

This is one of many issues that need to be resolved and will be informed by the Pilot operation of the new structure later in the year.

Officers are currently examining different models of the various elements of the new structure including how the Council, Cabinet and Portfolio Performance and Review Panel's can best be supported. In practice much will depend on how these bodies actually operate."

In accordance with Standing Order No. 9, Cllr Scott asked as a supplementary question what the total gross cost of the running of the Council at the present time was and comparative costs for the future.

The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee responded that New Forest District Council together with other local authorities had been forced by the Government to produce plans that were diverting money from direct public services.

20. NOTICE OF MOTION.

Cllr Robinson moved the following motion standing in her name:-

"This Council deplores the loss of openness and the lack of accountability and transparency which will result from the Government's imposition of decision making mechanisms which negate the influence of all members."

Cllr Robinson requested that the Notice of Motion be debated at the Council meeting to enable all members to participate, rather than it being referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Leader of the Council commented that all members were welcome to attend the Policy and Resources Committee. In view of the constantly changing regulations in relation to the modernising agenda it would be appropriate to delay the discussion of the debate until more definite Government guidance was received.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 7 the Notice of Motion stood referred to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

21. REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL AND ON COMMITTEES.

The allocation of seats to political groups following the resignation of Cllr Bright from the Liberal Democrat Group and his joining the Conservative Group was reviewed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a Committee place on the Direct Services Contracts Committee previously allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group be allocated to the Independent Group;
- (b) That Cllr Bowring be appointed to the Direct Services Contracts Committee in place of Cllr Bright;

- (c) That Cllr Maynard be appointed to the Planning and Transportation Committee in place of Cllr Bright; and
- (d) That Cllr Russell cease to be a member of the Planning and Transportation Committee and that Cllr Bright be appointed to that Committee in his place.

22. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE.

The Chief Executive reported that a meeting of the Industrial Relations Consultative Committee had taken place immediately prior to the meeting of the Council. The Committee had considered a report in relation to the Council's Pay Award and had agreed a 3% pay award for 2000/2001.

Cllrs Smith and M S Wade both declared pecuniary interests in this matter. They both indicated that if they had had prior notice of this matter they would have left the meeting. (There was no debate on the item).

CHAIRMAN

(CL170700)