

25 FEBRUARY 2002

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 25 February 2002.

- p Cllr Miss P A Drake - Chairman
- p Cllr J M Hoy - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p Mrs S M Abernethy
- p K F Ault
- p K E Austin
- p G C Beck
- e E R Bowring
- p F J Bright
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p D S Burdle
- p W R Catt
- p Mrs J L Cleary
- p J E Coles
- p D E Cracknell
- p B D Dash
- p J J Dawson
- p W H Dow
- p L T Dunsdon
- p B C Earwicker
- p M H G Fidler
- p Mrs L C Ford
- 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 P E Hickman

Councillors:

- p Mrs M D Holding
- p Mrs A M Howe
- p Mrs M Humber BA
- p J A G Hutchins
- p M J Kendal
- p G N D Locock
- p Mrs B M Maynard
- p Mrs M McLean
- p B M F Pemberton
- p A W Rice TD
- p B Rickman
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- p B Rule
- p T M Russell
- p D N Scott
- p M J Shand
- e S A Shepherd
- p Mrs B Smith
- p N L T Smith
- p Mrs L P Snashall
- p G Spikins
- p M H Thierry
- p D B Tipp
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p C A Wise
- e P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, N Gibbs, Ms E Malcolm, C Malyon, D Atwill, Ms J Bateman, Miss G O'Rourke and Mrs R Rutins.

56. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2001, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

57. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- (a) Following the by-elections on 21 February 2002 the Chairman welcomed Cllrs Mrs Ford, Hickman and Pemberton to their first meeting of the Council.

(b) **HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon**

Following the recent death of Her Royal Highness The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon the Chairman had sent a letter of condolence on behalf of the people of the New Forest District to the Right Honorable Sir Robin Janvrin, Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen.

(c) **Mr J Maynard**

The Chairman announced with regret the death of former Councillor Jack Maynard on 2 January 2002.

Mr Maynard had been a District Councillor from 1983 until 1994. He had served on the Housing, Licensing, Strategic Growth in Totton; Development Control and Policy and Resources Committees during his time as a Councillor. The Chairman, together with the Chief Executive had attended his funeral and a donation on behalf of all members and employees, had been made to Mr Maynard's charity, the Calshot Activities Centre Bursary Fund.

Members of the Council joined the Chairman in standing in silent tribute to the memory of the Princess Margaret and Mr Maynard.

(d) **Mr N Gibbs**

The Chairman announced that Mr Gibbs, the Director of Community Services had been appointed to the England Committee of the New Opportunities Fund.

The New Opportunities Fund was a National Lottery funding body responsible for assistance in the Health and Education sectors. The Government had recently announced that the fund had been awarded £580M for the development of PE and Sport in English Schools.

(e) **Best Value Survey**

The Chairman announced with pleasure that a survey recently published by the Government as part of the Best Value reporting process had confirmed that residents in the New Forest District Council area were more satisfied with the way in which the Council's services were delivered than anywhere else in the country.

New Forest District Council was the only Council in the country to achieve more than 90% satisfaction level in the survey. Just 20 authorities scored above 75% while only six achieved levels above 80%. The national average was 64%.

The Chairman commented that it was very pleasing to see the Council once again hitting the national headlines in such a positive way.

(f) **Doctor Andrew Bradbury**

The Chairman announced with pleasure that Dr Andrew Bradbury, Coastal Projects Manager, had been invited to become a visiting professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Southampton. The appointment followed a period of several years during which Dr Bradbury had worked with the University as a visiting lecturer and researcher, specialising in coastal processes, beach management and design of coastal structures. Dr Bradbury was well known within the International Coastal Engineering community and had practised as a scientific adviser on many Government funded coastal research projects.

This formal link between industry and academia would aid the development of applied coastal research programmes and provide technical and financial benefits to both the University and the Council.

(g) **Chairman's Dinner and Dance**

The Chairman reminded members of her Dinner and Dance on Friday, 12 April 2002 to be held at Hoburne, Bashley, in aid of her charity Canine Partners for Independence.

58. CABINET.

The Chairman of the Cabinet presented the report of the meetings held on 2 January and 6 February 2002.

On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted:-

(a) **Public Conveniences – Proposed Closures**

The Environment Portfolio Holder reported that he had received a number of letters relating to the toilet closures at Calshot including correspondence from the Beach Hut Owners' Association. Many of the correspondents objected to the proposed closures. He commented that the exact location of the replacement facilities would be subject to consultation with Fawley Parish Council and the Beach Hut Owners' Association.

He also confirmed that chemical toilet disposal points would be installed at Calshot Beach at locations within easy reach for the Beach Hut Owners.

A member commented that the consultation with Fawley Parish Council had so far been very poor and he proposed that the matter should be referred back for further consideration. He said that the Parish Council had already set their precept and were unaware of what costs might be involved should they be asked to consider taking over responsibility for the public toilets. He commented that the Beach Hut Owners had not been consulted. It was noted that the Beach Hut Owners on the Cadland Estate were able to stay overnight in their accommodation but it was the toilet nearest to them that was being closed. Whilst the Chairman of the Beach Hut Owners Association had been consulted this was insufficient as not all owners belonged to the Association. The current toilets needed to remain open until new facilities were built and in any case should not be closed until there had been meaningful consultation with the Parish Council. In terms of Best Value the member commented that the toilets had already been closed without any specific data as to their usage.

Other members spoke in support of the reference back. Members commented that the proposed toilet closures were purely for financial reasons and there had been no proper consultation process undertaken. One toilet at Calshot Spit would be insufficient. Very large numbers of people gathered at The Spit for various national and international events. The proposed toilet closures at Blackfield and Holbury would greatly affect the elderly population in the area. Whilst it was agreed that the toilets in Hampton Lane, Blackfield were inappropriately sited, no complaints on this particular matter had been received.

A member reported that the Clerk to Fawley Parish Council had useful data on specific needs in the area but he had not been specifically consulted. Whilst it was accepted that there were several toilets in need of refurbishment/rebuilding this should have been done in response to the needs of the public who use them. The matter should be referred back for further consideration to enable the Cabinet to take an overview and to show that the closures were not simply a response to budgetary savings.

Other members commented that the matter had been considered twice by the Environment Review Panel which had been open to any Councillor to attend. The Environment Review Panel had considered the report proposing the closures of certain public toilets and the proposals had been unanimously agreed.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the original review of public conveniences had been proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group. The Review Panel, in considering the report, had been able to come to their own view. There had been much media publicity relating to the proposed closures and there should have been no doubt as to the Council's intentions.

The Chairman of the Cabinet commented that whilst he was confident that Fawley Parish Council had been consulted appropriately on the proposals he would look again at the way in which the matter had been dealt with. If he found that the matter had not been dealt with appropriately, then he was prepared to take other action.

In relation to the proposals in Brockenhurst he said that Brockenhurst Parish Council and the residents of Brockenhurst would be consulted on the timing of the closure of the toilet on the main A337.

It was moved and seconded that the matter be referred back to the Cabinet for further consideration.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

(b) **Communities Against Drugs Initiatives**

A member commented that there was a need to distinguish between legal and illegal drugs. Whilst alcohol was legal this did in fact cause more problems than illegal drugs and a distinction should be made between the two. The Chairman replied that alcohol was not included within the definition of illegal substances.

(c) **General Fund Revenue and Capital Budgets**

In moving the report the Chairman of the Cabinet set out the background and reasons for the budget and Expenditure Plans for 2002/03. The Chairman moved an amendment to the report that the value of travel tokens should be increased to £39. The cost of introducing this would £44,000 which would be met by a reduction in the operating subsidy to Recreation Centres.

The amendment was seconded and upon a vote being taken the amendment was agreed.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Robinson, moved an amendment giving alternative budget proposals for 2002/03 as follows:-

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
DRAFT GENERAL FUND FORECAST 2002/03 TO 2005/06 BASED ON
2001/02 BUDGET

<u>12/04/02</u>	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Net Portfolio Requirements	19040	19040	19040	19040	19040
Transfer To Provisions					
Est. Inflation (salary related)		595	1135	1695	2275
Other Inflation		170	340	520	700
Sub Total (A)	19040	19805	20515	21255	22015
Capital Financing Provision	250	250	250	300	250

Sub Total (B)	19290	20055	20765	21555	22265
Transfer from DSO reserve	-250	-180	-180	-180	-180
Sub Total (C)	19040	19875	20585	21375	22085
Less Interest on Balances(net)	-1300	-1000	-1000	-1000	-1000
Sub Total (D)	17740	18875	19585	20375	21085
Transfer From Commutation/MRP	-293	-103	-123	-74	
Budget Requirements Total (E)	17447	18772	19462	20301	21085
Add Expenditure Plan Bids					
Corporate & Finance		767	828	923	957
Crime & Disorder		189	214	224	214
Economy & Planning		134	291	266	210
Environment		94	179	179	179
Health & Social Exclusion		22	22	22	22
Housing		102	104	106	108
Leisure		229	368	337	338
General Purposes & Licensing Committee		0	80	20	20
Planning Development Control Committee		0	0	0	0
Standards Committee		19	19	19	19
Sub Total Bids	0	1555	2104	2095	2067
Deduct Expenditure Plan Savings					
Corporate & Finance		-736	-804	-864	-938
Crime & Disorder		0	0	0	0
Economy & Planning		-200	-188	-223	-223
Environment		-261	-261	-261	-261
Health & Social Exclusion		-13	-13	-13	-13
Housing		-140	-150	-160	-170
Leisure		-397	-513	-620	-625
General Purposes & Licensing Committee		0	0	0	0
Planning Development Control Committee		-9	-9	-9	-9
Standards Committee			0	0	0
Sub Total Savings	0	-1755	-1936	-2148	-2237
Other Items	204	-201	-131	-61	-61
Car Parking Income		-600	-750	-750	-750
Efficiency Savings		-212	-212	-212	-212
Reductions in Bed & Breakfast		-55	-55	-55	-55
Concessionary Travel(including Blind/partially sighted Meals on Wheels		43	43	43	43
Env. Health Out of Hours Service		13	13	13	13
		8	8	8	8

Special Collections		30	30	30	30
Charges for Rats & Mice		60	60	60	60
Dog Waste Bags		3	3	3	3
Amenity Car Parks		20	20	20	20
Public Conveniences		26	26	26	26
Forecast Budget Requirements	Total (F)	17651	17706	18685	19373
Council Tax		110.24	115.75		

Members discussed a number of issues in detail. The view was expressed that there was resentment amongst the residents of New Forest at the abolition of car parking charges and now the closure of public toilets was raising similar concerns. Car parking charges would have provided an income for the Council where as now many residents who were pensioners and who did not qualify for rebates, were having to find a Council Tax increase of 9.4%.

In seconding the amendment Cllr Dash commented that during the Liberal Democrat Administration despite a loss of revenue support there had still been an increase in overall spending.

Other members pointed out that any estimates of income from car parking charges were not based on hard factual evidence and that the alternative budget proposed did not demonstrate long-term financial planning.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder in seconding the substantive motion thanked officers for their excellent work and housekeeping that had gone into maintaining the Council's finances. The Portfolio Holder commented that the Administration continued to modernise old services despite unsatisfactory support from central government.

In summing up the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group commented that the alternative budget was a realistic one for residents. The housing figures had been costed on the latest data available and were accurate. The Liberal Democrat alternative budget proposals needed to change year on year in order to respond to the Administration; it provided an outline for the coming years rather than a detailed plan. The alternative budget was fairer to the residents of the district many of whom were on fixed incomes.

The Chairman of the Cabinet in summing up said that the Liberal Democrat Group's amended budget proposals were not realistic, particularly in relation to the projected £600,000 income from car parking. Tourism was a major part of the New Forest and without it much employment would be lost.

The budget proposed by the Cabinet was based on principles of sound financial management and good housekeeping.

In accordance with Standing Order 51 a recorded vote was called for. Members voted for and against the amendment as follows:

FOR:

Councillors:

J E Coles
J J Dawson
B C Earwicker
Ms C F Gradidge
L E Harris
P E Hickman
Mrs M Humber
B M Maynard
Mrs M J Robinson
Mrs L P Snashall
M S Wade

Councillors:

B D Dash
L T Dunsdon
M H G Fidler
R C H Hale
F R Harrison
A M Howe
G N D Locock
Mrs M McLean
Mrs B Smith
G Spikins
S S Wade

AGAINST

Councillors:

Mrs S M Abernethy
K E Austin
F J Bright
D S Burdle
Mrs J L Cleary
W H Dow
Mrs L C Ford
P C Greenfield
J D Heron
J M Hoy
M J Kendal
A W Rice TD
B Rule
D N Scott
M H Thierry
C A Wise

Councillors:

K F Ault
G C Beck
Mrs D M Brooks
W R Catt
D E Cracknell
Miss P A Drake
R L Frampton
S A Hayes
Mrs M D Holding
J A G Hutchins JP
B M F Pemberton
B Rickman
T M Russell
N L T Smith
D B Tipp
Mrs P A Wyeth

The amendment was lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 51 a recorded vote was called for on the substantive motion. Members voted for and against the substantive motion as follows:-

FOR

Councillors:

Mrs S M Abernethy
K E Austin
F J Bright
D S Burdle
Mrs J L Cleary
W H Dow

Councillors:

K F Ault
G C Beck
Mrs D M Brooks
W R Catt
D E Cracknell
Miss P A Drake

Councillors:

Mrs L C Ford
P C Greenfield
J D Heron
J M Hoy
M J Kendal
A W Rice TD
B Rule
N L T Smith
M H Thierry
C A Wise

Councillors:

R L Frampton
S A Hayes
Mrs M D Holding
J A G Hutchins JP
B M F Pemberton
B Rickman
T M Russell
G Spikins
D B Tipp
Mrs P A Wyeth

AGAINST

Councillors:

J E Coles
J J Dawson
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Mrs M J Robinson
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Councillors:

B D Dash
L T Dunsdon
M H G Fidler
R C H Hale
F R Harrison
Mrs A M Howe
G N D Locock
Mrs M McLean
Mrs B Smith
M S Wade

ABSTENTION

Cllr D N Scott

The substantive motion was agreed.

It was therefore:-

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

Note: Cllr Earwicker asked that his vote against the decision in paragraph 2 (Public Conveniences – Proposed Closures be recorded). Cllr Dawson asked that his vote against the decision in paragraph 4 (Communities Against Drugs Initiatives) be recorded.

59. STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 29 November 2001 and 29 January 2002 as amended. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted

RESOLVED:

Subject to the inclusion of an amended Appendix 2, the Report be received and the recommendations adopted.

60. PORTFOLIO HOLDER QUESTION TIME.

Question No. 1 from: Cllr Robinson to Cllr Greenfield, Portfolio Holder, Housing

"Officers are to be congratulated on their success in achieving PPG3 allocations of affordable housing on new development sites. However it has recently come to my attention that not all of this housing is realistically 'affordable' as the properties built for shared ownership purchase on the Dreamland site in Hythe are actually more expensive than similar market housing in the area.

To be precise, the shared ownership 2 bedroom houses on the Dreamland development are for sale at between £130,000 and £132,500.

Whilst this is considerably cheaper than other homes on the development, a local estate agent has told me that recent house sales on the Waterside have been at £97,950 for a similar sized property in Holbury, £110,000 for a 2-bed semi in Dibden Purlieu.

Based on current charges, to purchase a 25% share in one of the Dreamland homes would involve a monthly outlay of at least £452 a month, for mortgage repayment, rent and service charges.

Given this information, does the portfolio holder share my concern that the prices of these shared ownership homes puts them out of reach of many of the people who would qualify to be housed in them?

Will he be taking steps to ensure that future shared ownership schemes sponsored by this authority are truly affordable and so can play a more effective part in helping people solve their housing problems?"

Answer

The Housing Portfolio Holder congratulated officers on their success in achieving PPG3 allocations on affordable housing on new development sites. Housing officers were working hard to fulfill targets for the current year in relation to keyworkers such as nurses and the police. There was also a package of ideas to reduce the use of bed and breakfast. Whilst there was a modest number of shared ownership properties built each year the Council was looking to increase this percentage. Shared ownership properties had to be affordable and the Council was working towards this. The Portfolio Holder was of the view that the properties on the Dreamland development were more affordable than other properties in the same area with a comparable rental that was determined by independent valuation.

Question No. 2 from: Cllr M Wade to Cllr Hayes, Portfolio Holder, Policy & Strategy

"I am sure you will have read the Crime and Disorder Audit 1999 to 2002, an excellent document prepared by our officers highlighting the crime issues both in actual crime and fear of crime in the New Forest District. Bearing that in mind and following the recent resignations from the Cabinet it is noted that the Economy and Planning portfolio holder was replaced rapidly but I believe that Crime and Disorder has not due a general review of Portfolios.

Does the Leader of the Council believe that Crime and Disorder particularly following the part success of the CCTV bid for central government money is no longer as important an area needing a portfolio holder to champion its cause, or is he about to announce a new Portfolio holder to take up the very real Crime and Disorder issues that the audit has highlighted are important to the people of the New Forest?"

Answer

No and No.

Cllr M S Wade in a supplementary question then asked the Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder if he was unconcerned that nationally 25% of people in a recent survey had been a victim of crime in the last 12 months. The cost of crime within the New Forest District had been over £14M in the last 12 months. He asked in the light of this why did the Administration not appoint a Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman responded that clearly this was an important topic. Although there was currently no Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder appointed the Cabinet collectively had taken on the role and he, as Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder kept a 'watching brief'. He agreed that whilst the fear of crime within the New Forest was considerable it was less than in the rest of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The CCTV proposals contained in the budget would reduce the perceived fear of crime and it was hoped to extend the CCTV provisions to other towns in the future. The Council, working in partnership, particularly with the Education and Youth Service, would also assist in reducing the fear of crime. The Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder commented that action was being taken to encourage more people to join the Police Force.

Question No. 3: It was noted that Cllr Shand had given notice of the following question to Cllr Rickman, Portfolio Holder, Leisure

"Although it has existed for several years without official recognition or financial support from this council, the Fordingbridge Visitor Information Centre has received funding from the Town Council, Southern Tourist Board and the business community. However this is now insufficient for continuing viability and the VIC is currently under threat of closure. A recent grant of £1000 from the Foot and Mouth reparation fund has been very welcome, but will not ensure its future.

Would the Portfolio Holder say what measures are in hand to accept the finality of the current situation and support this venture, or otherwise identify the manner in which he will promote Tourism in the town?"

This question was held over to the next Council meeting as Cllr Shand had left the meeting. The Chairman declined to permit the question to be put by another member.

61. BY-ELECTIONS FOR MILFORD, PENNINGTON AND RINGWOOD NORTH WARDS.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Returning Officer on the by-election for the Milford, Pennington and Ringwood North Wards held on 21 February 2002 be noted.

62. REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL AND ON COMMITTEES.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the places on the Appeals Committee and the Environment Review Panel allocated to the Independent Group be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group; and
- (b) That Cllr Hickman be appointed to the Appeals Committee and to the Environment Review Panel.

63. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cllr Wise be appointed to the Industrial Relations Committee;
- (b) That Cllr Beck be appointed to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee;
- (c) That Cllr Pemberton be appointed to the Corporate and Finance Review Panel;
- (d) That Cllr Mrs Ford be appointed to the Crime and Disorder Review Panel; and
- (e) That Cllr Pemberton be appointed to the Housing, Health and Social Exclusion Review Panel.

64. NOTICE OF MOTION.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion standing in the name of Cllr Locock be deferred for consideration at the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CL250202/MINUTES.DOC)