



22 APRIL 2002

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 22 April 2002.

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

Councillors:

- Mrs S M Abernethy
- p K F Ault
- p K E Austin
- p G C Beck
- p 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
- e 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
- e 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
- p S A Shepherd
- p Mrs B Smith
- p N L T Smith
- e Mrs L P Snashall
- p G Spikins
- p M H Thierry
- p D B Tipp
- e M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p C A Wise
- p 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.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations of interest were made.

66. MINUTES.

It was moved and seconded that the following paragraph be added to minute number 58 – Report of Cabinet (General Fund Revenue and Capital Budgets as a new third paragraph of text on page 7):-

‘Spending under the Liberal Democrats had increased by only £577,000 despite an inflation increase of £1.76M and withdrawal of grant of £1.3M. This could be contrasted with the £2.56M increase in spending by the current administration despite an increase of grant of £1.3M’.

In considering the proposed amendment it was noted that verbatim notes were not taken at Council meetings and the detail suggested in the amendment was not in keeping with the usual style of Council minutes.

Upon a vote the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the addition of Cllr S A Shepherd being marked as present, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2002, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

67. CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

The Chairman reported that following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother volumes of a Book of Remembrance were opened at each of the District Council locations. The separate volumes were to be bound together and would be sent to the Queen.

The Chairman announced that a letter of condolence had been sent on behalf of the people of the New Forest District to the Right Honourable Sir Robin Janvrin, Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen.

Members of the Council joined the Chairman in standing in silent tribute to the memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

(b) The Chairman’s Dinner and Dance

The Chairman announced with pleasure that her dinner and dance held at Hoburne Bashley on 12 April 2002 had raised £464.50 for her charity, Canine Partners for Independence. The Chairman thanked members, employees and local businesses that had donated prizes for the raffle for their generosity.

The Chairman also reported that Mr Peter Jameson, Assistant Building Control Surveyor, had raised a further £150 for Canine Partners for Independence and the Dorset Dyslexia Association in a sponsored beard shave.

(c) Plant Hunters Fair

The Chairman announced that a Plant Hunters Fair was to be held in the grounds of Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Saturday, 11 May 2002 from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The fair would give everyone a chance to buy rare, unusual and exotic plants and shrubs from specialist growers. The fair would also include botanical paintings, terracotta pots and planters and craftsmen-made goods for the house and garden.

68. PETITION RE PUBLIC TOILETS AT CALSHOT.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 23 the Council received a petition containing approximately 270 signatures with the following wording:-

“We the undersigned wish to protest at the closure of the public toilets at Calshot. As owners of beach huts and members of the public we believe that the amenity we have enjoyed for a number of years and for which we pay through our Council Tax and rents will be significantly damaged. Many of us are senior citizens and we ask that the Council reverse its decision to close the public toilets at Calshot.”

In accordance with Standing Order No. 38 the Chairman agreed that the matter was urgent and should be discussed at that meeting.

Mrs Mumford, a petitioner, addressed the Council.

Mrs Mumford said that three weeks previously the toilets in the large car park close to the beach huts had been closed. Many people were very unhappy that the Council had taken this course of action. Whilst the toilets in question had subsequently been repaired, decorated and re-opened, local people and the beach hut owners wanted to be assured that the toilets would remain open permanently.

Calshot Beach was very popular and many of the beach huts were able to accommodate people overnight. There were many families with children using the area and it was becoming apparent that fouling was occurring on the beach between the huts.

Mrs Mumford said that whilst the toilets close to where the buses terminated were not always in a good condition they were adequate. It was clear that the closure of the toilets affected a great number of people over a large area. The beach hut owners were of the opinion that as they were paying Council Tax and car parking charges in the area they expected there to be a reasonable level of facilities available to them.

The Leader of the Council said that there were two main issues, that of the closure of the existing facilities and what they would be replaced by. He would have agreed with the petition if the facts on which it was based had been correct. The toilets in the car park at Calshot had remained closed this year due to vandalism and repairs being required. This closure had no connection with the permanent closure proposed as part of the budget proposals agreed by the Council at its last meeting. Whilst members of the public had signed the petition in good faith the Leader felt that they had been misled as to the long term future of this particular toilet block at

Calshot. Whilst he accepted that the consultations that had been undertaken with Fawley Parish Council and the beach hut owners could have been better, he was of the view that the matter was now moving forward. Officers had met with the Clerk to Fawley Parish Council and the local member and had agreed that discussions should be held with the beach hut owners to try to come to a local agreement whereby beach hut users could take some responsibility for the provision of facilities. It was a possibility that the toilet block could become a private building with keys for users. The style and location of the proposed new enhanced toilet facilities on Calshot Spit would be discussed with the Parish Council and the beach hut owners and the Leader emphasised that this, together with the provision of chemical toilet disposal points had been part of the original package of proposals.

The Leader confirmed that the current toilet facilities would remain open until negotiations with all interested parties had been completed and replacement facilities were available. A number of members said that to replace the two current toilet blocks with one new facility would not be helpful to users. Calshot Spit itself was very long and toilets were needed at either end. Another member commented that the toilets in Holbury were closed and a notice on the building directed people to the toilets in Blackfield. Unfortunately, the toilets in Blackfield were also closed.

In response to a question the Leader commented that he was not aware of any instruction that had been issued to reopen the toilets at Calshot quickly. However, he was concerned to hear that notices on surrounding toilets were unhelpful and this issue needed to be addressed. He said that the Council was pursuing a plan of improvements to toilets which would result in the closure of some older blocks and the replacement of some facilities.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be noted and the public toilets at Calshot remain open until negotiations with Fawley Parish Council and the beach hut owners are completed and replacement facilities are available.

69. STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 5 March 2002.

Mrs Madeline Sumsion, from South East Employers addressed the Council.

Mrs Sumsion had been a member of the independent remuneration panel that had reviewed the members' allowances scheme. The unanimous view of the panel was that the scheme that had been approved in November 2000 was still broadly acceptable. The Panel had found that there was broad satisfaction with the structure of the current scheme and that some adjustments, rather than a major review, was appropriate. The Panel did not feel that there was a need for any change in the calculated time input of ten hours per week, on which the basic allowance was calculated. The rate of

£10 per hour on which the current allowances scheme was based was the average gross hourly earnings for full time adults in 1999. The Panel had considered it appropriate to recommend an increase in this hourly rate to £11.18 per hour, the national average for full time adults shown in the latest earnings survey published in January 2002. This represented an 11.8% increase on the current hourly rate.

Mrs Sumsion said that the Panel had examined the responsibilities of the Cabinet, Chairmen of the Review Panels and various other roles and had concluded that there was no evidence to justify changes to most of these. However the Panel had felt that there were sound reasons for increasing the allowance paid to the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee and for a new special responsibility allowance for the Chairman of the Standards Committee. The Panel had found no evidence to support the need for a special responsibility allowance for either the Deputy Leader of the Council or Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels.

Members attending the meeting of the Standards Committee had expressed concern about the proposed 11.8% increase in the basic allowance in the context of a Council Tax increase of 9.4% for 2002/03. The Committee had noted that the recommended amount of £3,900 was not excessive as a basic allowance when compared to other Councils in the region.

The Standards Committee had felt that, as half of its members were not District Councillors and as decisions on allowances were influenced by factors such as public opinion, the full Council should decide on the adoption or otherwise of the Panel's recommendations. However, the Committee endorsed the methodology, rationale and principles set out in the Panel's report.

In response to a question Mrs Sumsion reiterated that it was the Panel's view that it was not unreasonable to base members allowances on the recommended increased hourly rate of £11.18. However, she agreed that it would be helpful at any future Remuneration Panel for the issue of accountability in relation to allowances to be considered.

The Leader of the Council said that the roles and responsibilities of members had changed beyond recognition in the last few years. Their role was now more professional and the public expected greater accountability and efficiency. The roles of executive members were now demanding and non executive members had specific responsibilities for scrutiny. He commented that for democracy to be fully exercised took time and understanding which was difficult to achieve if members were in full time employment elsewhere. A Councillor had no job security or pension and the hours of work were not conducive to family life. He felt that more needed to be done to convince the electorate of the value of this enhanced role. However, he believed that increases in allowances above 3% were inappropriate at this stage. Accordingly, the following amendment was moved and seconded:-

- (a) That the Council accepts the methodology and rationale behind the Independent Panel's recommendations but considers that the level of increase recommended by the Panel is inappropriate at this stage;

- (b) That the notional hourly rate for members' time, applicable to the calculation of the basic and special responsibility allowances, be increased by 3% from £10 to £10.30 per hour and that individual allowances be rounded up or down to be divisible by 12;
- (c) That the increase recommended by the Panel in the Special Responsibility Allowance to the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee to the level of that of the Review Panel Chairmen be agreed;
- (d) That the Special Responsibility Allowance recommended by the Panel for the Chairman of the Standards Committee, based on an input of 80 hours per annum (the same as for the Chairman of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee) be agreed;
- (e) That the current allowances to the Deputy Leader of the Council and to Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels cease;
- (f) That the Dependant Carer's Allowance be increased to £4.50 per hour;
- (g) That no provision be made in the Scheme for automatic uprating of allowances;
- (h) That no other changes be made to the Scheme or to Special Responsibility Allowances at this stage;
- (i) That the Scheme be reviewed annually;
- (j) That the above allowances apply from 21 May 2002;
- (k) That additional expenditure of £10,376 to finance the above changes be approved.

A number of members spoke in support of the amendment. They felt the suggested 3% increase was sensible. Some members were of the view that the scheme was disadvantageous to those in employment and further consideration was needed on how to make the role of a councillor more attractive to young people.

Mrs Sumsion commented that legislation specifically prohibited payment of an attendance allowance and that it was difficult to set allowances at an appropriate level to attract younger people.

Members noted that the amendment proposed retained the status quo of no provision in the scheme for automatic uprating of allowances. The scheme would be reviewed annually.

Upon a vote the amendment was agreed.

The substantive motion was then put and upon a vote was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the following recommendation adopted:-

- (a) That the Council accepts the methodology and rationale behind the Independent Panel's recommendations but considers that the level of increase recommended by the Panel is inappropriate at this stage;
- (b) That the notional hourly rate for members' time, applicable to the calculation of the basic and special responsibility allowances, be increased by 3% from £10 to £10.30 per hour and that individual allowances be rounded up or down to be divisible by 12;
- (c) That the increase recommended by the Panel in the Special Responsibility Allowance to the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee to the level of that of the Review Panel Chairmen be agreed;
- (d) That the Special Responsibility Allowance recommended by the Panel for the Chairman of the Standards Committee, based on an input of 80 hours per annum (the same as for the Chairman of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee) be agreed;
- (e) That the current allowances to the Deputy Leader of the Council and to Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels cease;
- (f) That the Dependant Carer's Allowance be increased to £4.50 per hour;
- (g) That no provision be made in the Scheme for automatic uprating of allowances;
- (h) That no other changes be made to the Scheme or to Special Responsibility Allowances at this stage;
- (i) That the Scheme be reviewed annually;
- (j) That the above allowances apply from 21 May 2002;
- (k) That additional expenditure of £10,376 to finance the above changes be approved.

70. STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 16 April 2002. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted it was:-

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations adopted.

71. CABINET.

The Chairman of the Cabinet presented the report of the meetings held on 6 March, 18 March, 8 April and 15 April 2002.

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

(a) Revised Deposit Stage of the Local Plan Alterations (15 April 2002)

In response to a question the Chairman agreed that, as well as the Economy and Planning Review Panel, the Housing, Health and Social Exclusion Review Panel and any other Panels as appropriate would be involved in further consideration of the Local Plan alterations.

In discussion members indicated their general support for the deferral of the revised deposit stage of the Local Plan Alterations. A number of members commented that further work was needed on the Council's policies in relation to the provision of care homes. Members generally agreed that this issue was a particularly difficult one in terms of conflict between the provision of additional care homes and the needs of the New Forest area generally. Members were of the view that care home provision within the District should be expanded to support the needs of local people.

The Chairman of the Cabinet responded that whilst the deferral of the Local Plan was a significant decision it was necessary to enable further consideration to be given to the provision of more care homes in the District. There was a greater demand for those with more acute needs and the Council's policies needed to address this. It was acknowledged that it would be some time before new policies could be implemented. However, in the meantime it was hoped that the Planning Development Control Committee would use their judgement with any current care home applications to give regard to the Council's emerging plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

72. PORTFOLIO HOLDER QUESTION TIME.

Question No. 1 from: Cllr Shand to Cllr Rickman, Portfolio Holder, Leisure held over from meeting on 25 February

"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?"

Answer

The Leisure Portfolio Holder said that the Council had always had a consistent approach to tourism in Fordingbridge. The last year had been a particularly bad time in the area because of the foot and mouth outbreak and severe flooding. There was a need to concentrate on creating and delivering a clear plan to put Fordingbridge at the centre of local tourism.

The Council's view has always been to establish a Fordingbridge Tourism Action Plan via a community tourism group and the New Forest Tourism Association. This would improve the local product and therefore the attraction to visitors. This together with appropriate marketing needed to be done before the Council could consider the viability of a Visitor Information Centre. Visitor Information Centres in themselves did not increase visitor numbers.

To help address the future of tourism in Fordingbridge, the Council's Tourism Team had promoted a Fordingbridge Community Tourism Workshop on 15 March 2002 at Sandy Balls Holiday Centre. The workshop identified 30 action points for the future. The principle issue was the formation of a community tourism group. Once produced, the Fordingbridge Tourism Action Plan would be incorporated into the New Forest Tourism Strategy which was due to be published in the Autumn of 2002.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to ongoing financial support the Portfolio Holder commented that he hoped that Fordingbridge members would work with the Community Tourism Group to develop a strategy for the future.

Question No. 2 from: Cllr Rule to Cllr Heron, Portfolio Holder, Crime & Disorder

"The New Forest Crime Audit shows that New Milton and Hythe have higher crime rates than any other town in the forest & that half of all criminal damage is committed by those between the ages of 10 and 18. Yet these are the only two towns that have not been included in the CCTV scheme. Therefore, do you agree that your top priority must be to tackle youth delinquency in these 2 areas?"

Answer

The Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder responded that New Milton and Hythe did have high crime rates compared to the rest of the New Forest. However, it was not concentrated in the town centres as much as some other towns. The crime statistics for the crime audit were based on the Police Station boundaries which, for example, in the case of Hythe also covered the Netley View, Blackfield and Calshot areas.

Both New Milton and Hythe were included in the submission to the Home Office for inclusion within the CCTV scheme. However, that part of the bid had not been approved. If further funding was available in the future those two towns could be included in the scheme. The control room was designed with the capacity to do so.

Youth delinquency and criminal damage were identified as two of the main priorities in the new community safety strategy. To tackle these the New Forest Community Safety partnership had introduced a protocol for the issue of acceptable behaviour contracts and anti-social behaviour orders and had created a half time temporary post to administer them.

The Council had also played a significant role in the development of football projects. The scheme had initially begun in Ringwood with Leisure Services providing an opportunity to disaffected young people to become involved in sports activities. The scheme had been so successful that it had been expanded to Clayfields in Hythe where approximately sixty young people regularly attended every Friday night. New Milton Club had also opened a Friday night activity offering sports, music and dancing. The Council, through the Crime and Community Safety Action Group, provided pump prime funding for this project.

Question No. 3 from: Cllr Humber to Cllr Hayes, Leader of the Council (in the absence of Cllr Kendal, Portfolio Holder, Environment)

"In the past few days I have had phone calls from residents who have had problems with rat infestations and the difficulty in finding the £30 charge for a visit from the Council. Could the Leader of the Council clarify the position regarding the charges for people on low incomes?"

Answer

The Leader of the Council commented that if a resident was in receipt of either Council Tax Benefits; Housing Benefit; Income Support or a Job Seekers Allowance then the service was offered free of charge. In a supplementary question Cllr Humber commented that she had personally visited the Town Hall and had been told that there were no concessions for the clearance of rat infestations.

The Chairman again reiterated the criteria for the receipt of the free service and said that the Council, as landlord, accepted responsibility for such problems in its own housing stock.

Question No. 4 from: Cllr N Smith to Cllr Wise, Portfolio Holder, Finance and Support

"During the budget debate the Liberal Democrat opposition stated that they could make £212,000 of efficiency savings and £200,000 of other savings. Can the portfolio holder tell us if since the debate the Liberal Democrats have approached him with any details on how to make these savings or have they offered any help in saving the residents of the New Forest money? Or does he believe these savings only existed within the imagination of the opposition spokesman and that they were fully aware they could make whatever promises they liked because they would never have to implement them?"

Answer

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder responded that if efficiencies had been identified then these would have been implemented to keep the Council Tax to a minimum to protect the less well off. The Council had been able to introduce new services and reduce the Council's net initial requirement for funding by £1M. The Liberal Democrat budget had claimed that a further £400,000 savings was achievable although the Portfolio Holder was of the view that this would have required an 11% Council Tax rise. No detailed proposals for savings had been received from the Liberal Democrat Group.

Question No. 5 from: Cllr Robinson to Cllr Hayes, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder, Policy and Strategy

"Could the Leader confirm that in the region of £10,000 was spent last year in preparation for the consultation on traffic management issues proposed by the then portfolio holder. Does the Administration have any intention of minimising this waste of public money by allowing consultation to take place in the coming months?"

Answer

The Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder responded that £5,000 had been spent on commissioning consultants to complete a comprehensive survey and review into the options and implications of the Council taking over responsibility for on-street parking under powers known as decriminalised parking arrangements. This was not considered to be a waste of money. Cllr Robinson challenged the accuracy of the figure and asked in a supplementary how much it had cost to prepare information leaflets that were never sent and how much officer time and money had been spent to reprint the front page of the employee newspaper. The Portfolio Holder responded that the money spent for research would have been the same in any circumstances. There would be a meaningful consultation process in the future with proposals going to Panels.

Question No. 6 from: Cllr Dash to Cllr Hayes, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder, Policy and Strategy

"Can the Leader give an estimate of the impact on this authority of the Chancellor's recent announcement of his intention to increase the employers' National Insurance contributions and what effect this is likely to have on service delivery in the future?"

Answer

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Council would need to find an additional £115,000 in total as a result of increases in Employers' National Insurance contributions. Of this £90,000 would fall to the General Fund and £25,000 to the Housing Revenue Account.

Question No. 7 from: Cllr Harris to Cllr Hayes, Leader of the Council (in the absence of Cllr Kendal, Portfolio Holder, Environment)

"We as a Council have in place legislation on dealing with abandoned vehicles.

We do not appear to have a service to deal with residents who have vehicles that have come to the end of their useful life who require disposing of their vehicles in a proper manner and at a cost to themselves. I believe if such a service was implemented it could help reduce the cost to the Council of abandoned vehicles.

A resident recently contacted me and said he was going to scrap his vehicle in the near future but could not obtain any service or advice from us, this lack of service encourages abandoned vehicles.

Will you please look at this situation regarding residents who do not abandon their vehicles but wish to scrap in a responsible way?"

Answer

The Leader of the Council responded that the Council's current role was to deal with vehicles that had been abandoned, to remove them and take action if the culprits could be traced. If a responsible member of the public asked the Council for assistance then the names and phone numbers of two contractors who would take the vehicle away were provided. The contractor would make a charge of £40 for the service.

The Council was concerned that the 'End of Life Vehicle Directive' would impact on the number of potentially abandoned vehicles. Under that directive vehicles would have to be properly dismantled with all gases, fuels, oils etc. being removed and recovered, this would increase the disposal costs by approximately £40 per vehicle on top of the current commercial charge of approximately £40.

The Council would be in a position to provide a direct service to the public and, provided responsible vehicle owners paid the estimated £80 to the Council, arrangements would be made to dispose of the vehicle. However, there was real concern that some motorists would not behave in a responsible manner and it was probable that the Council would be faced with an increase in the number of abandoned vehicles at a significantly increased cost of recovery and disposal.

Question No. 8 from: Cllr N Smith to Cllr Hayes, Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder

"NFDC have recently published information that shows that "More than 66 per cent of soon-to-be-confirmed performance indicators to come out of last year's Best Value review, equal or better the top 25 per cent of district councils in the country; and that more than 92 per cent of local residents said they were satisfied with Council services - more than residents in any other part of the country. This does not seem to be the same Council that the Liberal Democrat opposition attacked during the budget debate claiming that services were being cut. Does the Portfolio Holder for Policy & Strategy agree with me that the opposition are constantly attempting to score political points with misleading information and does he agree that the Liberal Democrats should stop bashing the Council and the hard working employees who are delivering excellent services?"

Answer

The Portfolio Holder responded that members generally needed to exercise care when referring to officers in public when officers had no opportunity to respond. Members recognised the calibre and high quality of officers employed by the Council and encouraged the innovative and creative work that they did. It was accepted and understood that officers did need to take a degree of risk within the work that they undertook and this should be defended in terms of the excellent service that they provided.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 47 Councillor Robinson, as a matter of personal explanation, said that she wished it to be clear that at no time did any of her group criticise officers in public.

73. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

That

- (a) Cllr Mrs Ford be appointed to the Appeals Committee in place of Cllr Heron;
- (b) Cllr Miss Drake be appointed to the Corporate and Finance Review Panel in place of Cllr Heron;

- (c) Cllr Tipp be appointed to the Leisure Review Panel in place of Cllr Heron; and
- (d) Cllr Pemberton (full member) and Cllr Mrs Brooks (substitute) be appointed to the Industrial Relations Committee.

74. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2002/03.

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Hoy be nominated as Chairman and Cllr Hutchins as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the following municipal year.

75. SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF POWERS.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Scheme of Delegated Powers to Officers in respect of Council functions as detailed in Report B to the Council be agreed; and
- (b) That the amendment to the Terms of Reference for the General Purposes and Licensing Committee as detailed below be agreed:-
 - 1. To be responsible for all matters relating to the licensing and registration functions determined by the Council under Part B, and the functions relating to public rights of way and closing orders with respect to take-away food shops determined by the Council under Part I of Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.....(remaining provisions unchanged)
 - 6. To approve the Authority's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet or record of receipts and payments (as the case may be) under The Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996.

76. NOTICE OF MOTION.

Cllr Locock moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name:-

“This Council acknowledges that all Scrutiny Panels should be and seen to be free of all party political direction.”

In accordance with Standing Order No. 41 the Chairman of the Council agreed that the motion be dealt with at the meeting.

Cllr Locock in moving the motion said that he thought that all votes at Scrutiny Panels should be by a secret ballot.

A member's first duty was to represent the best interests of their electorate. The role of Scrutiny Panels was vital. There would always be occasions when an individual member was not in agreement with the broad view of the political Group of which he was a member and therefore voting by a show of hands could be seen as a constraint. It was important to show the public that decisions were taken without constraint.

In seconding the motion Cllr Robinson commented that all members had a responsibility to consider issues honestly and objectively without the involvement of party politics. There had been instances in the last few months where it appeared that political objectivity had not been observed and this had been to the detriment of a decision making process.

The Leader of the Council said that he still held the view that secret ballots were not appropriate. Voting by a show of hands was open, transparent and members could be held accountable.

Other members pointed out that it was inevitable in some cases that members of political groups would vote together on some issues because they held similar views. Members generally supported the view expressed in the Notice of Motion.

In summing up Cllr Locock commented that the purpose of his Notice of Motion had largely been fulfilled by the discussion. Whilst he agreed that Panels were not decision-making bodies they could lead to a recommendation to change a decision. He hoped to see non-political views coming through in the debate at Scrutiny Panels in the future.

After discussion it was:-

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be agreed.

77. EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING.

RESOLVED:

That an extraordinary meeting of the Council be held on Monday, 17 June starting at 6.00 p.m. to consider the Council's Best Value Performance Plan.

CHAIRMAN