

9 SEPTEMBER 2002

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 9 September 2002

p Cllr J M Hoy - Chairman
e Cllr J A G Hutchins - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

p 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
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
e Miss P A Drake
e L T Dunsdon
p B C Earwicker
p M H G Fidler
e 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
e S A Hayes
p J D Heron

Councillors:

p P E Hickman
p Mrs M D Holding
p Mrs A M Howe
p Mrs M Humber BA
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
e M J Shand
p S A Shepherd
e Mrs B Smith
p N L T Smith
p Mrs L P Snashall
e G Spikins
p M H Thierry
p D B Tipp
p M S Wade
p S S Wade
p C A Wise
p P R Woods
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

N Gibbs, Ms E Malcolm, C Malyon, Ms J Bateman and Mrs R Rutins.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr M S Wade declared a personal interest in Minute 26.

23. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to Minute 20 (Notice of Motion) paragraph 5, second sentence be amended to read 'she commented that the proposed provision of the Job Centre Plus Bureaux offered a fully integrated work and benefits service', the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2002, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) September 11th

The Chairman reported that the Union Flag would be flown at half mast from all Council buildings on Wednesday, 11 September. A minute's silence would take place at 1.46 p.m. to mark the First Anniversary of the moment that the World Trade Centre attacks begun last year.

(b) Sculptures in the Garden, Appletree Court

The Chairman reported with pleasure that the De Rothschild family of Exbury Gardens were loaning three pieces of African stone sculpture to display in the gardens of Appletree Court. The sculptures would be in the gardens until June 2003. A highlight would be a demonstration by the sculptors from Zimbabwe of the skill and creation of their art at the Plant Hunters Fair to be held on Saturday, 10 May 2003.

(c) Kate Howard

Kate Howard, an employee at Applemore Recreation Centre, had competed for Wales in the Commonwealth Games held in Manchester in the under 48KG weight lifting competition.

Kate had only been in the sport for two years and was already a Welsh Champion and ranked British No. 1. Her performance in the games was extraordinary. She finished in fourth position in a life time best equalling the British Snatch Record and setting a new British record in the Clean and Jerk and for the total weight lifted in the games.

Members joined the Chairman in congratulating Kate, who was present at the meeting, on her achievement and looked forward to seeing her again after the Olympics.

25. CABINET.

The Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet presented the reports of the meetings held on 7 August and 4 September 2002. In presenting the report the Vice-Chairman moved that item 4 of the Cabinet report dated 7 August – 'Financial Report for the Period April 2002 – June 2002' be deferred for further consideration of the capital expenditure in relation to Lymington Quay. The Vice-Chairman said that since the Cabinet meeting there had

been developments which required further discussion. The Environment Review Panel at their meeting on 12 September 2002 would be considering the issue and a further report would be made to the Cabinet. The Cabinet report would also include information how the contract had performed. It was noted that there had been problems with the contract and that whilst up to date information on this aspect might not be available for the Environment Review Panel, more detailed information on the rest of the accounting of the scheme would be.

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

(a) Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy – Submission of Plans for 2002/03 (7 August 2002)

Members commended officers for their work in producing the Asset Management Plan within the short timescale available. However, they agreed that they did need a longer period of time to consider the document in future.

The Vice-Chairman commented that the Plan would be produced well in advance of deadlines in future years.

(b) Review of Road Traffic Management Scheme – Employment of Consultants (4 September 2002)

A member said that Southampton City Council (SCC) were considering proposals for Traffic Use Schemes within the city and asked if NFDC's consultation on Traffic Management would take into account any charging schemes that SCC might introduce. The Vice-Chairman replied that the consultants had been given a wide brief that included consultation with every Town and Parish Council and he was sure that many different issues would be raised. The brief was informative as well as questioning.

26. GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE.

The Chairman presented the report of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held on 5 September 2002. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendation adopted:-

(a) Pay Award 2002 – Interim Settlement

Cllr M S Wade declared a personal interest in this item in that his spouse was employed by the authority. He considered his interest to be prejudicial and left the meeting for the debate and the vote.

A member asked if the Chairman agreed that the public image of Councillors would be enhanced if members agreed to fund the £33,000 required for the additional cost of the pay award by a one-off reduction in members allowances. The Chairman did not agree and, in responding, commented that the employees were the Council's biggest asset and he hoped that members would support the interim pay settlement.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendation adopted.

27. PORTFOLIO HOLDER QUESTION TIME.

Question No. 1 from: Cllr Ben Rule to Cllr Colin Wise, Portfolio Holder, Finance & Support

Since the New Milton Offices project is a partnership between different organisations and since its development is not in our hands alone, has the Cabinet appointed a lead officer with overall responsibility to ensure that NFDC's interests are maintained during the process of construction?

Answer

Yes, the Director of Resources.

Question No. 2 from: Cllr Nick Smith to Cllr Simon Hayes, Portfolio Holder, Policy & Strategy

(In the absence of Cllr Hayes, the Chairman ruled that Cllr Kendal could reply on his behalf).

Could the Leader of the Council confirm how much it has cost the residents of the New Forest for New Forest District Council to respond to the Government's White Paper "Your Region Your Choice" and the "South East Regional Transport Strategy Paper" and can he confirm what the cost this financial year will be to NFDC of the South East Regional Assembly, including officer time, members' allowances and responding to papers. Can he also confirm if and who are NFDC's representatives at this assembly or any of its sub-committees.

Answer

In responding the Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet, on behalf of the Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder commented that, in view of the importance of the issues raised, the Cabinet had decided to defer consideration of the White Paper "Your Region Your Choice" to enable the full Council to debate the matter and to make recommendations back to the Cabinet before a response was made to the Government.

Generally the costs incurred had been minimal, amounting to less than £900. Member attendance at meetings of the South East England Regional Assembly had not incurred any additional expenditure. The Vice-Chairman agreed that the number of regional meetings and consultation documents that the Council now had to respond to were increasing. However, this was the price of democracy.

In response to a supplementary question the Vice-Chairman commented that whilst he thought that the South East Regional Assembly could be considered as an undemocratic quango it was a forum where directly elected members could comment.

Question No. 3 from: Cllr Martina Humber to Cllr Peter Greenfield, Portfolio Holder, Housing

Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing agree with me that it is iniquitous that our Council Tenants, through the Housing Revenue Account, have to subsidise all benefit claimants, whereas other social housing tenants do not?

Answer

The Housing Portfolio Holder replied that council tenants were now involved much more in setting their own rent levels. He agreed that the rent rebate subsidy was unfair but reiterated that the rent levels were ultimately set by the tenants themselves. The additional funding received from rents had been used to increase the housing stock for the tenants' benefit. The subsidy scheme was to be reviewed shortly.

In a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder was asked if he thought that the tenants should have been consulted on the Finance White Paper and what he considered to be the impact on the tenants of the Local Government Bill.

The Portfolio Holder responded that the tenants should be consulted on the White Paper and that all the information was widely and publicly available. The impact of the Local Government White Paper was not known yet but the situation would continue to be monitored.

Question No. 4 from: Cllr Bob Hale to Cllr Jeremy Heron, Portfolio Holder, Crime and Disorder

Research recently published claims that the installation of fixed CCTV cameras across the country has had little if any effect on overall levels of crime. Indeed it is only in car parks that a significant drop in crime is attributed by researchers to the installation of CCTV cameras. In other areas their view is that improved street lighting is more effective as a crime deterrent.

Given this report, what actions will the Portfolio Holder be taking to ensure that residents in areas covered by the local CCTV scheme, derive the maximum benefit from it, whilst at the same time explaining what proposals he has to protect residents in areas not covered by the scheme, from crime and anti-social behaviour that might be displaced from CCTV areas?

Answer

The Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder responded that the use of CCTV had had a significant effect in the district so far. There were several prosecutions taking place as a result of information gathered on CCTV and the Police had requested footage. He could not comment on the benefits of increased street lighting. He

believed that the use of CCTV in town centres was beneficial. The Council would like to roll out the scheme to other areas of the district but this was not possible without further Government funding which currently was not available. There was no significant evidence of “displacement crime” taking place as a result of the installation of CCTV.

In a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder was asked if, given the levels of anti social behaviour that were happening across the district, what action he was taking to ensure there would be more policemen on the beat.

The Portfolio Holder commented that whilst he understood that people would like to see more policemen on the beat this was not a matter for the Council, although the Council would continue to make representations to that effect. Hampshire Constabulary had indicated that there was little chance of the number of beat policemen being increased.

Question No. 5 from: Cllr Bob Hale to Cllr Peter Greenfield, Portfolio Holder, Housing

Will the Portfolio Holder confirm to date, the number of council houses sold by this authority since the enactment of 'right to buy' legislation and the number of applications for housing currently on the council's housing waiting list.

Answer

The Housing Portfolio Holder detailed the following information:

95 Council Houses sold in the last financial year
 4,000 Council Houses sold since the Right to Buy legislation had been introduced
 2,800 applicants on the Home Search Register (2,500 during last year)
 made up as follows:

Council Transfers	399
Housing Association Transfers	325
Homeless needing secure accommodation	340
Homeless needing temporary accommodation	72
New Applicants	1,664

The Council expect to have 672 homes available this year (last year 637 were available)

Homeless Applications up to July - 126 (81 accepted)

Number of families in bed and breakfast last week	25
Number of households in bed and breakfast last year	197
Number of households in bed and breakfast so far this year	57

In response to a supplementary question asking what advice the Council were giving on the revised Right to Buy legislation the Portfolio Holder said that he felt it would be wrong to comment until the changes were seen. The Council were still increasing their stock of leased properties and were working with the Rural Housing Enabler to increase the flow of properties through villages.

Question No. 6 from: Cllr Paul Hickman to Cllr Jeremy Heron, Portfolio Holder, Crime and Disorder

Is the Portfolio Holder aware of the displacement of nuisance that has occurred since the CCTV camera in Pennington was moved from The Square to Howards Mead? There is now continual and ceaseless disturbance in the school holidays in this area.

Answer

The Portfolio Holder responded that he was not aware of the situation but would look into the problems.

28. NOTICE OF MOTION.

Councillor Shepherd moved the following motion standing in his name:-

“New Forest District Council supports the campaign for doorstep recycling services to every home by 2010, with central government providing the resources for such schemes. Benefits would include jobs locally; reduced pressure for landfill sites and incinerators; benefits to the environment via further cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases and a reduction in the demand for raw materials, so encouraging sustainable and local waste management.”

In accordance with Standing Order No. 41.2 the Chairman of the Council agreed that the motion be dealt with at the meeting.

An amendment was moved to amend the second line of the Motion to read “.....2010, providing that central Government provide the resources for such schemes.....”

Cllr Shepherd in moving the Motion said that meeting recycling targets was a problem faced by all districts across Hampshire. All Councils' had difficulty in finding sufficient resources from within their existing budgets. The Government had to accept responsibility for funding and it was imperative that the Government were encouraged to provide sufficient funding.

In seconding the Motion Cllr Dash said that he could not support the amendment. The Council supported the principle of recycling regardless of whether the Government provided the funding. However, the Government must be encouraged to support the concept financially to safeguard the environment. He expressed concern that the Waterside would now be importing huge quantities of waste from Southampton who currently recycled only 5% of their waste.

The Environment Portfolio Holder commented on the income produced by Project Integra and said that he supported the Motion. Figures from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister showed that New Forest were the 10th best authority in England and Wales for recycling. For the Council to increase their recycling performance further would cost more than the extra credits that would be available from the Government. There came a point when going forward with others in Partnership became more economically viable.

The amendment was withdrawn.

Other members spoke in support of the proposal. It was noted that there were still parts of the district that were not yet part of the doorstep recycling scheme. It was pointed out that this was due to insufficient capacity in the local recycling facility. This problem would be solved much sooner than 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the motion as set out above be adopted.

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CL090902/MINUTES.DOC)