

## **REPORT OF CABINET**

**(Meeting held on 1 October 2003)**

### **1. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DISTRICT OF NEW FOREST (OFF-STREET CAR PARKING PLACES ORDER) (REPORT A)**

The Council at their meeting on 24 February 2003 agreed that a scheme for parking in Council owned car parks, based on a clock system charged at £5 per annum with an option of meter charging, should be introduced following full consultation.

The Cabinet has now agreed a series of amendments, based on recommendations from the Economy and Planning Review Panel, to the District of New Forest (Off Street Parking Places) Order. The Panel has considered consultants' recommendations together with comments from Town and Parish Councils concerning the management of the Council's car parks.

The introduction of car parking is the first stage of part of the Council's commitment to a New Forest Traffic Management Strategy. The Council are looking ahead at the way in which the traffic will increase over the next ten years and car parking charges are only part of a programme of measures that will be introduced to address the problem. The Council will be looking at partnership working with other bodies to consider issues such as alternative 'quick' routes through the forest, shuttle bus services and increased use of public transport.

Illegal parking adds to congestion and the Cabinet said that the aim is to introduce, as soon as possible, arrangements to take over responsibility for On Street Parking Regulations. Additional revenue will be needed to put these measures in place and therefore the intention is to introduce car parking charges with effect from January 2004 to help fund the Strategy. It is intended that the parking clocks will be on sale in December. In view of the short timescale, for a specific period at the beginning of January, although parking charges will be in force, enforcement will not be undertaken. Instead, motorists will receive a reminder notice.

The Cabinet noted that the Review Panel and Town and Parish Councils felt that a review of the ratio of long/short term car parking should be done after the scheme had been in place for a year. By then any changes to patterns of parking will be apparent and alterations can be made accordingly. Members also noted that any vehicle displaying a blue 'disabled badge' would be able to park free of charge.

To take the process forward the Cabinet has authorised officers to take the appropriate steps laid down in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) Regulations to advertise amendments to the District of New Forest (Off-Street Parking Places) Order to implement these recommendations, with a view to initiating charging from 2 January 2004.

## **2. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2003 TO AUGUST 2003 (REPORT B)**

Subject to agreement of the supplementary estimates detailed below, the Cabinet has approved the revised General Fund budget, the revised capital expenditure and the revised Housing Revenue as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of report B to the Cabinet. They also noted the financial position of the Commercial Services Directorate.

For the General Fund the new variations show an estimated net increase in expenditure for the full year of £33,000. The actual expenditure shown for the end for August 2003 is £976,000 below the profiled budget expenditure. However, the Cabinet noted that work is ongoing to set more accurate profiled budgets and that the major areas of variations are being monitored.

In particular, members noted that special collections and domestic and garden waste sacks were now exempt from VAT. The Council had received a refund for transactions made between June 1998 and May 2003. The Cabinet has agreed that, on production of a receipt, a VAT refund will be given to customers who have used the special collections service or purchased sacks during the specified time period.

The Environment Portfolio Holder said that he was of the view that the cost of special collections and domestic and garden waste sacks should remain the same. All review panels would be considering their fees and charges as part of the budget process, and it was for them to take a view.

In terms of other capital expenditure the new variations show a decrease in expenditure in 2003/2004 of £135,000. Excluding items of rephrasing, virement, developers' contributions and external funding, the impact is an increased call on the Council's capital resources of £15,000.

For the Housing Revenue Account the new variations show a decrease in net expenditure of £3,000. The actual net expenditure at the end of August 2003 was £62,000 above the profiled budget expenditure. However, the Cabinet again noted that work was also ongoing in that area to set more accurate profiled budgets and to monitor areas where variations have been identified.

The Commercial Services account showed a net surplus of £115,203 for the period April to July 2003. However, this surplus was overstated by approximately £40,000 due to stores items not being correctly posted since the new purchasing system was implemented. The Cabinet noted that this issue was being addressed.

### ***RECOMMENDED:***

***That the following supplementary estimates be approved:***

- ***£23,000 for the income shortfall on Offices***
- ***£59,000 income shortfall from Hythe Market***
- ***£120,000 reduction in interest earnings***

### **3. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) SERVICES – BEST VALUE (REPORT C)**

The Cabinet has considered the Best Value review of the ICT services and agreed the Action Plan for continuous improvement of the service over the next five years. Any actions in the plan that do not require additional resources will be implemented in accordance with the timetable. Any actions requiring additional resources will either be met by efficiency savings, or will not be implemented until sufficient budgetary provision is provided.

The review concluded that the ICT service has many strengths with clear aims. There is an ICT strategy for the next three years supported by an investment programme. The service is well managed, staff are customer focused and it has in place clear policies and procedures that support the business needs of the Council and its customers.

The review concluded that there was scope to produce cost savings and generate income by a number of measures including reviewing the structure and composition of ICT services in order to redeploy resources to boost technical support to end users.

A number of service improvements were also identified including reviewing the operation of the ICT help desk; the need for increased capacity and set response times in the technical support team; managing the funding implications of equipment replacement and wider access to ICT training.

A workshop has been held with representatives of the self-assessment team and stakeholders to consider a number of alternative options for the delivery of the service. They came to the view that the preferred option was to reorganise the service in order to implement the improvements identified during the review process. The strong message coming out of the review was that things are working well at present but there is scope to make some improvements.

### **4. COMMERCIAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE – BUILDING MAINTENANCE SECTION – ADDITIONAL RESOURCE (REPORT D)**

The Cabinet has agreed to the creation of a new clerical post in the Building Maintenance Section of the Commercial Services Directorate to support a new appointments regime.

The Building Maintenance Section undertakes reactive maintenance for 50% of the Council's housing stock. The contract for undertaking this work was subject to tender earlier in the year. The Building Maintenance Section submitted a shadow bid, alongside other tenderers, in order that competitiveness could be demonstrated.

The new specification required a number of enhancements to the standard of service provided including the need for appointments to be made in 95% of cases. This work could not be accommodated within the existing resources. The cost of an additional clerical post to undertake this work was therefore included in the shadow bid submitted for the new contract.

**5. LEADER+ APPOINTMENT OF FOREST FRIENDLY FARMING (FFF) LOCAL PRODUCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (REPORT E)**

The Cabinet has agreed that a bid be made to the LEADER+ programme for funding of a part time FFF Local Produce Development Officer, to help commoners and other small scale local producers to meet the requirements of suppliers, promotional events and marketing opportunities. The Council will act as employer for the post.

In 2001 the Council was successful in its application for LEADER+ funding for a £2.1m programme over 6 years to implement a series of measures designed to add value to local products within the New Forest Heritage Area. The programme, now in its second year, is community led by groups representing a wide range of interests and is proving very successful.

The New Forest LEADER+ Action Plan 2002 – 2004 has identified the need for a local produce co-ordinator to focus on the development of an FFF marque and to assist in the development of smaller producers' ability to market their produce successfully and participate in local promotional activity.

**6. RINGWOOD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL (REPORT F)**

The Cabinet had agreed that the Ringwood Conservation Area Appraisal, as attached at Appendix 2 to report F to the Cabinet, be adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the New Forest District Local Plan.

This is the fifth in a programme of six appraisals that have been prepared for those conservation areas in the District where there is the greatest likelihood of commercial development pressure, and therefore the greatest need for detailed design guidance. The appraisals for Milford-on-sea, Fordingbridge, Lymington and Lyndhurst have already been adopted and the appraisal for Hythe is due to go out for public consultation. The Ringwood appraisal was supported by the Ringwood Town Council and the Ringwood Society.

The Cabinet has congratulated officers on the high quality of the document that they had produced.

**Cllr M J Kendal  
CHAIRMAN**