

## REPORT OF CABINET

(Meetings held on 3 March and 7 April 2004)

### 1. **PROJECT INTEGRA ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2004/05 (REPORT A – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 123)**

The Cabinet has agreed the Project Integra Annual Business Plan for 2004/2005. The Council, along with all other local authorities in Hampshire, are members of Project Integra. Project Integra was established in 1995 and seeks to achieve a fully integrated waste management scheme for Hampshire and is recognised as being one of the leading waste management partnerships in the UK.

Project Integra has two principal objectives for 2004/05, to improve the capture and quality of collected dry recyclables in Hampshire. In addition, the Environment Portfolio Holder said that he would be pursuing additional ways of achieving waste minimisation across the district.

### 2. **DISPOSAL OF LAND AT GARAGE SITE, WARNES LANE, BURLEY (REPORT B – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 124)**

The Cabinet has noted the decision of the Director of Resources taken, as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4 that the land at the garage site in Warnes Lane, Burley be transferred freehold to New Forest Voluntary Housing Association for £40,000. The transfer is subject to planning consent being granted to NFBVHA to develop the site for affordable housing and subject to an overage clause claiming back an uplift in value should planning restrictions for the site be lifted in the future. The capital receipt of £40,000, received will be recycled to fund affordable homes.

The proposal will enable 7 affordable homes to be developed on the site that will be allocated to applicants from the Council's Homeseach register. There was a very tight timescale for the scheme, with the Housing Association required to draw on the grant funding by 10 March 2004 hence the need for an urgent decision.

### 3. **CRANBORNE CHASE AND WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN (REPORT C – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 125)**

The Cabinet has agreed the Management Plan for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The plan has been prepared in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 which places a statutory duty on the constituent local authorities of AONBs to prepare and publish an AONB by 1 April 2004 and review it at five yearly intervals.

This particular Management Plan covers the Downlands area of the district and includes the villages of Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury. There has been a high level of consultation with local communities and stakeholders. The Plan is presented around three themes of Environment, Rural Economy and Community and contains a set of action plans covering the next five years.

A full copy of the document is available in the Members' room.

**4. CHURCHILL COURT, GORE ROAD, NEW MILTON (REPORT D – 3 MARCH AND 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 126)**

The Cabinet has considered a number of options for the future of Churchill Court. Churchill Court is classed as a hard to let property and requires extensive work to bring it to the standard of other accommodation within the area. The lifestyle expectations of older people now mean that they rightly expect better accommodation with their own facilities.

The welfare of the tenants is paramount and members noted that the residents in Churchill Court particularly wished to stay in that geographical location close to services and amenities.

The Cabinet has agreed that a detailed feasibility study be carried out with a view to pursuing in the long term, the option of redevelopment of Churchill Court for the provision of general needs affordable housing provided by a Registered Social Landlord. This would offer the opportunity to maximise the number of dwellings on the site to around 20 with a mixture of houses and flats. This would also allow the dwellings to be targeted at applicants on the Homesearch Register. Discussions will be held with the Housing Corporation with the aim of securing funding but it is recognised that in the absence of funding being made available through that route, consideration will need to be given to the Council providing grant assistance.

The main concern of the residents at Churchill Court was that they did not want any change. The Housing Portfolio Holder has met with the residents and has confirmed to them that they could stay in their homes for as long as they wished and under no circumstances would they be forced to move. Some residents had already moved out, and no new allocations were being made.

Members made it clear that the proposed redevelopment was a long-term policy and residents could stay in their homes for as long as they wished. If a resident did decide to move they would be offered all the support they needed at the Council's expense. Alternatively, they could choose to move out temporarily and come back to a new build unit. If required they could also be offered mobile sheltered warden services.

The residents of Churchill Court had circulated to members a document asking them to consider the option of refurbishment and reiterating their wish to remain in sheltered housing in their current location. In response to this, members again reiterated that the proposal to develop the site was a long term one and none of the residents would be forced to move.

In response to the points raised in discussion, officers confirmed that whilst potential sites for housing were continually being monitored, officers would again look at all possible sites in New Milton to ensure that no opportunities were missed. Although private sheltered accommodation continued to be built there was clearly less demand for Council owned sheltered accommodation.

**5. FORMER ROYAL NAVY ARMAMENTS DEPOT MARCHWOOD – COMPLETION OF FLOOD DEFENCES AND PUBLIC FOOTPATH (REPORT E – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 127)**

The Cabinet has approved a scheme and associated leasing of land for the completion of flood defences and a public footpath at the former Royal Navy Armaments Depot (RNAD) at Marchwood. The scheme will be implemented using developers' contributions.

The former RNAD is an important historic site with many of the original walls and buildings still intact and listed. In recent years much of the site has been developed for residential use with the developer constructing, as part of the planning agreement, flood defences in the area and a promenade and various footpaths. Through the same agreement the developer has provided funding for this completion of the sea defences and the construction of a public footpath on land not within their ownership.

This work is a good opportunity to complete the public footpath network in this area and create a high quality public access to the waterfront. The proposals have been developed in conjunction with Marchwood Yacht Club, the Crown and Associated British Ports who all have interests in the land. Marchwood Parish Council has also supported the proposal.

**6. MILFORD SEAFRONT : DETAILED SCHEME (REPORT F – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 128)**

The Cabinet has approved a renovation scheme for Milford seafront.

The renovation of Milford Promenade and the seafront has been an aspiration in the Council's Coastal Management Plan for some time. There has been extensive public consultation on a scheme drawn up by independent consultants against a brief devised in close consultation with the Parish Council.

The scheme is based on three elements comprising a core scheme of essential works, other works that have mainly arisen from discussions with Milford on Sea Parish Council and possible future items that might be considered in the longer term. This way the scheme remains realistic within the resources available and will offer real benefit to the users of the seafront.

Copies of the detailed plans showing the main elements of the scheme will be made available for display purposes locally.

**7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2004/05 (REPORT G – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 129)**

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) have for a number of years been discussing the possibility of releasing councils from restrictions on capital spending. The result of this is a professional code that sets out a framework for self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing councils to invest in capital projects without any limit as long as the projects are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Cabinet has therefore considered the detail of a Treasury Management Strategy that will cover the operation of the Council's treasury function for the forthcoming years together with the impact of the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

The Prudential Code requires the Council to agree and monitor a minimum number of prudential indicators. With the Council intending to become debt free, the Cabinet has agreed that further consideration should be given to developing the focus on improving the Council's position within those indicators.

Members acknowledged that the Strategy and the Prudential Code were complicated areas of expertise and they agreed that specific member training in these matters would be arranged.

**RECOMMENDED:**

**(a) That the prudential indicators and limits as detailed in report G to the Cabinet (3 March 2004) be adopted; and**

**(b) That the treasury management strategy 2004/05 be approved.**

**8. THE FUNDING OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDED THROUGH THE PLANNING PROCESS (REPORT H – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 130)**

In line with national planning policy, all new housing developments, above specified size thresholds, are required to make provision for an element of affordable housing as part of the development scheme. To date it has been the Council's practice to negotiate on the basis on that the developer would be paid 50% of the land value, by a registered social landlord (RSL) for the land required for the affordable housing provision.

As a result of a number of changes in Government policy, the Cabinet has now re-considered the issue and has agreed that, on planning applications now received by the Council, requiring an element of affordable housing provision, negotiations will be on the basis that the land owner(s)/developer(s) makes land available for affordable housing provision to a registered social landlord at nil value.

The new Regional Housing Strategy sets out priorities for allocating its own resources through the Housing Corporation. The strategy indicates that areas other than New Forest may be viewed more favourably for future regional housing. It is clear that if the Council is to maximise the chances of securing regional funding, the New Forest housing strategy must reflect regional priorities.

The Housing Corporation is placing added emphasis on achieving value for money and keeping grant requirements per dwelling down.

In December 2003, the Council received a letter from the Housing Corporation on behalf of the South East Regional Housing Board indicating that on new schemes, funding would not be available through social housing grant to pay a land owner/developer anything for the land on which affordable housing provision was to be made. As a result the Cabinet has agreed that the Council should revise its current practice for negotiating land for affordable housing to one where a land owner/developer is required to make land available to a RSL at nil value. Where this approach would mean that grant is still required funding will probably need to come from the Council's own social housing grant budget.

In the longer term, the Council will need to give further consideration to the type of affordable housing that should be provided, taking into account the regional agenda.

**9. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2003/04 AND KEY TARGETS 2004/05 (REPORT I – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 131)**

The Cabinet has noted the assessment made of performance against the 2003/04 Key Targets as set out in Report I to their meeting of 3 March 2004.

The targets are an important part of the Council's performance management framework and are based on the most important elements of the Service Plans which, when allocated to Portfolios, form a plan for the Council for the way ahead.

Members agreed that there is still a need to develop the targets further to ensure that they reflect what the Council wants for the year ahead. The Cabinet has agreed that once further work has been undertaken on the targets all Members should be consulted on the revisions before the Cabinet considers them again.

The targets will form part of the Performance Plan to be agreed by the Council and published in June 2004.

**10. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – FUTURE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS (REPORT J – 3 MARCH 2004) (MINUTE NO. 133)**

The Cabinet has agreed the Boundary Committee's draft recommendations for the revised County electoral arrangements, insofar as they relate to New Forest District Council. However, they have advised the Boundary Committee of specific concerns that they have at the proposals for Fordingbridge, Dibden & Hythe and Fawley Divisions in that they do not take account of the need to maintain communities and community boundaries.

In regard to the Fordingbridge Division, it was suggested that the addition of Bramshaw Parish and part of Copythorne would make that division too large. The current twelve parishes already provided a heavy workload for the County Councillor. With regard to the proposals for Fawley, the view was expressed that placing the Furzedown and Hardley Ward into the Fawley division would be inappropriate, and would exacerbate the existing unsatisfactory arrangement of cross boundary representation in that area. A scheme that would enable Hythe & Dibden to remain as one division was favoured or, alternatively, one that would link the north of the Parish with areas to the north, would be preferable.

At the end of the consultation period the Boundary Committee will make recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject the Committee's recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when the new arrangements will come into effect. It is usual for new electoral arrangements to apply from the next ordinary election following the making of an Order. Provided there are no unforeseen delays, the new Divisions should take effect from the May 2005 County Council elections.

**11. DISPOSAL OF LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING, LANGDOWN LAWN, HYTHE (REPORT B – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 140)**

The Cabinet has considered a proposal for the disposal of land at Langdown Lawn, Hythe to Hampshire Voluntary Housing Society (HVHS) to enable the development of 11 affordable homes that would be allocated to applicants from the Council's Homesearch Register.

The site is currently in freehold ownership of the Council and is occupied by 1 vacant dwelling in poor condition on a substantial plot. Given the priority that is attached to the provision of new affordable housing the most favoured option for this site would be disposal for affordable housing. This will allow the development potential of the site to be maximised.

Ward members and Hythe and Dibden Parish Council have been consulted and have no significant objections. There is an issue relating to right of access to the site from Racketts Lane but HVHS believe this can be overcome.

The Housing Portfolio Holder supports the need for more affordable housing and the Cabinet has recommended that the disposal should be supported.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That the land at Langdown Lawn be transferred freehold to HVHS for £440,000, the transfer being subject to planning consent being granted to HVHS to develop the site for 11 affordable dwellings; and**
- (b) That the capital receipt (£440,000) be recycled as LASHG to facilitate the development.**

**12. PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2004/2005 (REPORT C – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 141)**

The Cabinet has agreed, subject to the agreement of the Council to the recommendation below, the list of schemes as set out in Appendix 1 to report C to the Cabinet on 7 April, as the planned maintenance and improvements programme and Cyclical maintenance programme for 2004/2005.

The items included in Appendix 1 are a summary of the various headings of expenditure comprising the total budget provision. The Cabinet has also agreed that the Assistant Director (Housing Landlord Services) be delegated power to agree the works to be carried out at specific addresses, within the budget heads allocated by the Council.

In order to reflect the higher standards now specified together with a higher than anticipated internal redecoration programme for sheltered housing, it will be necessary to increase the cyclical maintenance budgets by £77,000 and decrease the planned maintenance programme accordingly.

The work proposed in the programme is broadly in line with previous years. The main purpose of the work is to maintain the fabric of Council homes and ensure that services such as electrical and heating installations are maintained in a safe condition and replaced when necessary. The programme will also ensure that the Council meets the Decent Homes Standard for its properties by 2010.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That a virement of £77,000 be made from the Planned Maintenance Programme 2004/05 (decreasing it to £3,674,000) to the Cyclical Maintenance budget (increasing that to £1,060,000).***

**13. HANGER FARM, TOTTON : ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION (REPORT D – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 142)**

The Cabinet has agreed that a sum of up to £200,000 be allocated from developers' contributions for open space, to cover additional commitments that have emerged during the contracted works. The additional funding will be applied on the same basis of the current arrangements for stage payments.

The request for additional funding arises from five main elements of the project:

- Upgrade to access and parking (£43,000);
- Removal of additional tip soil (£39,000);
- Additional excavation (£30,000);
- Revised planting scheme (£35,000);
- CCTV (£40,000);
- Contingency allowance (£13,000).

The project has an overall budget of approximately £3m of which £1,985,000 is funded from developers' contributions. This is a very substantial project with significant ground works over a large area. The additional funding requested is considered to be a prudent sum for the effective completion of the project.

**14. MEALS ON WHEELS – CHARGES FOR 2004/2005 (REPORT E – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 143)**

Hampshire County Council has set the price for Meals on Wheels at £2.60 per meal. This is an increase of 10p for the County and is 15p more than the New Forest District recipients are currently paying.

At the time the NFDC Meals on Wheels budget for 2004/2005 was set, HCC had not decided on the County meal price. As a result the 2004/2005 budget was based on the existing meal price. The WRVS have found it necessary to increase their charges for delivery of Meals on Wheels within the District by £6,600 for 2003/2004. This additional charge will be split 50/50 with HCC and the Cabinet has therefore agreed a supplementary estimate of £3,300 for the 2003/04 financial year to cover this increased cost.

Meals on Wheels and sheltered housing residents meals are budgeted to cost the Council £68,560 in 2004/2005. A 10p increase in the meal price from £2.45 to £2.55 will increase income by £6,400 for the full year. The income would be shared 50/50 between HCC and NFDC. Any increase below 10p would still leave NFDC having to fund the £3,200 County share and leave a lesser share to NFDC to fund increasing service costs. The Cabinet are therefore recommending that the cost be increased by 15p to £2.60 in line with the County Council charge, which will reduce NFDC's costs by a further £3,200.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the Meals on Wheels meal price for 2004/05 be set at £2.60 per Meal, generating an additional budget contribution of £6,400 towards increased service costs.***

**15. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2003 TO FEBRUARY 2004 (REPORT F – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 144)**

The Cabinet has considered the forecast budget variations of all Portfolios and Committees from the approved original estimates for 2003/04. They have agreed, subject to the recommendation below, the revised General Fund budget; the revised Capital Expenditure budget; the revised Housing Revenue Account; the financial position of Commercial Services and the actual expenditure to profiled budget positions of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account all as set out in the appendices to report F to the Cabinet.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder has thanked the Corporate Management Team and officers for the proactive action that has been taken to address the possible budgetary overspend. He was pleased to note that the position of the General Fund budget was now in line with projections.

**RECOMMENDED:**

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

- ***£75,000 increase in costs for Highways Agency Services;***
- ***£25,000 for Portmore Flood Relief;***
- ***£20,000 increase in costs as a result of reduced service charges income.***

**16. REVIEW OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRASS AND SHRUB MAINTENANCE (REPORT G – 7 APRIL 2004) (MINUTE NO. 145)**

The Cabinet has agreed that, subject to the legal agreement meeting the approval of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, New Forest District Council will enter into a renewed Agency Agreement with Hampshire County Council to maintain the urban grassed areas and shrub beds on highway land from 1 April 2004. The existing frequency for grass cutting on Hampshire County Council agency areas within the New Forest District is ten cuts with HCC funding six and NFDC enhancing the service with a further four cuts. However this approach is not consistent County wide. The current agency arrangements terminate on 31 March 2004 and the opportunity has been taken to review the general principles of the agreement.

Under the new funding formula HCC will continue to pay for the first six cuts, but due to the way in which the funding formula works, this revised formula indicates that HCC will cover 75% of the total benchmarked grass cutting costs. The reason for the 75% apportionment is that HCC have recognised that the benchmarked price per m<sup>2</sup> to cut grass six times a year is more expensive than the first six cuts in a ten cut frequency.



The current frequency of shrub bed maintenance is also inconsistent across the District with some HCC shrub beds being visited every three years and others annually. The new proposals based on a benchmarking cost, will allow at least one visit a year to all HCC shrub borders. Where funds will allow, additional pruning visits will be undertaken during the summer months on areas of rapid growth, especially site lines, road junctions, footways and cycleways.

**Cllr M J Kendal  
CHAIRMAN**

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