

23 FEBRUARY 2005

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on Wednesday, 23 February 2005.

- p Cllr Lt Col M J Shand - Chairman
- p Cllr Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p G Abbott
- e K F Ault
- p K E Austin
- p C Baker
- p G C Beck
- p Mrs J L Cleary
- p D E Cracknell
- p G F Dart
- p W H Dow
- p Miss P A Drake
- p L T Dunsdon
- p M H G Fidler
- p Ms L C Ford
- p Mrs L P Francis
- p P C Greenfield
- p R C H Hale
- p C J Harrison
- p D Harrison
- p F R Harrison
- p J D Heron
- p D A Hibbert
- p P E Hickman
- e Mrs M D Holding
- e J M Hoy
- p Mrs M Humber
- p J A G Hutchins
- p M J Kendal
- e Mrs B M Maynard
- p Mrs M McLean

Councillors:

- p M J Molyneux
- p R J Neath
- p G J Parkes
- p J Penwarden
- p L R Puttock
- p A W Rice TD
- p B Rickman
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- p B Rule
- p D J Russell
- p T M Russell
- p D N Scott
- p N E Scott
- p S A Shepherd
- e Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs S I Snowden
- p M H Thierry
- p A R Tinsley
- p D B Tipp
- e Mrs B Vincent
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p G M Walmsley
- p J G Ward
- e A Weeks
- e Dr M N Whitehead
- p C A Wise
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, N Gibbs, C Malyon, J Mascall, Ms J Bateman, K Green, Miss G O'Rourke and Mrs R Rutins.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Robinson declared an interest in Minute No. 56
Cllr Kendal declared an interest in Minute Nos. 56 and 60

55. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(a) Cllr Mrs Maureen Robinson

The Chairman announced with great pleasure that Cllr Mrs Maureen Robinson had been appointed the new Chairman of the Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust.

The Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust (formerly the West Hampshire NHS Trust) was a major provider of healthcare in Hampshire providing specialist services for a population of over 1 million that were registered with six separate Primary Care NHS Trusts. The Trust was formed to manage and provide specialist mental health and learning disability services, bringing into a single trust services previously provided by Southampton, Salisbury, Winchester and Dorset NHS Trusts. The Trust was also a teaching Trust with an active programme of research and development.

Members joined the Chairman in congratulating Cllr Robinson on her appointment.

56. CABINET.

Cllr Robinson declared a personal interest in item 15 of the Cabinet's report (Land at Challenger Way) as a Board Member of the Medina Housing Association (affiliated to the Western Challenge Housing Association.) She did not consider her interest to be prejudicial. She remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

Cllr Kendal declared a personal interest in item 5 of the Cabinet's report (General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2005/06 – 2008/09) as a member of Hampshire County Council. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

(a) General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2005/06 – 2008/09

The Leader of the Council made a statement on the Administration's proposed budget that was attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder seconded the recommendation.

The Leader of the Opposition then made a statement that was attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes and moved an amendment giving alternative budget proposals for 2005/06 as detailed in Appendix 3 to these minutes.

Cllr Baker seconded the Leader of the Opposition's amendment.

Other members then discussed the detail of the budget proposals.

A member said that the traffic management scheme had only been introduced to produce revenue. The Liberal Democrats had been criticised for increasing parking charges when they were in power. However, a 20% increase in the parking clock had been agreed for 2005/06. The Council were now cutting services and raising prices, which showed financial mis-management.

Another member said that the Rural Assistance Grant scheme had been used to significant effect in Fordingbridge and had greatly assisted the youth shelter project. The Community Responders Scheme was also making a genuine impact in the area.

Other members said that the budget appeared to be supported solely by car parking charges.

A member said that once the underspend proposals had been removed from the Liberal Democrat budget proposals there was very little else of substance left. The Administration's proposals were realistic and well thought out and, therefore, there was very little the Opposition could do to improve upon them.

A member said that the approach being used by the Liberal Democrats was unbalanced. Their proposals would reduce the reserves below the level recommended by the Audit Commission.

In seconding the Leader of the Opposition's amendment, Cllr Baker expressed concern at the levels of underspends both on the General Fund revenue budget and on the HRA. In terms of procurement, the Council lacked a central procurement executive. Whilst the Council had an excellent Resources Directorate, there was a lack of commercial procurement back up. He agreed there was little scrutiny of the budgets by the review panels, but he felt this was because all of the chairmen of the Panels were from the majority group.

In seconding the original recommendation, the Finance and Support Portfolio Holder said that the Administration had tried hard to keep costs down and had succeeded. The Liberal Democrat budget concentrated on one year only and the proposals were for short-term gain. No account was taken of the substantial expenditure that the Council was faced with and the lack of support from central Government.

The Leader of the Opposition, in summing up, said that she was very surprised that some members thought that £300,000 of expenditure was marginal and lacked substance. She said the Liberal Democrat budget gave money back to the residents and gave a long-term view. She commended the alternative budget to the Council.

The Leader, in closing the debate, said that any underspends on the General Fund would be used as a contribution to the capital programme. Savings from previous years had been treated in that way and had helped to fund capital projects such as Hythe Promenade and Totton Town Centre regeneration. The savings could not be used to fund capital projects and reduce the Council Tax as well. The capital programme had to be funded and the only way of achieving that would be to use savings or undertake borrowing. The Council had managed its resources very soundly and as a result had achieved an excellent Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating.

Members agreed that the Rural Assistance Grant scheme; Transport for young people in the New Forest; and the Community Responder scheme should all be referred back to the relevant Panels for review.

Upon a vote, the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the reports of the Cabinet dated 5 January and 2 February 2005 be received and the recommendations adopted.

57. GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENCING COMMITTEE.

The Chairman presented the report of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee dated 14 January 2005. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted it was:

RESOLVED:

That the reports of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee dated 14 January 2005 be received and the recommendations adopted.

58. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' QUESTION TIME.

Question No. 1 from: Cllr Hale to Cllr Mrs Holding (Health and Social Inclusion Portfolio Holder)

“The Portfolio Holder will no doubt acknowledge the important role that beekeeping plays in rural areas such as the New Forest. As animal welfare is part of her portfolio will she investigate the impact that government cuts will have on the National Bee Unit, the health of local bee stocks and the implications for horticulture and agriculture in the New Forest? Would she then make representations to the government on behalf of local beekeepers?”

Answer:

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder, the Chairman agreed that the Leader should respond.

The Leader replied that whilst the Council had responsibility for animal welfare he did not believe it included researching issues to the extent outlined in the question. Entomology and the associated diseases were best left to the experts.

However, there was one issue on which he felt he could comment. The Government cuts referred to were those that had been caught up in the Civil Service review. The Leader said that he understood that it could mean a cut of £250,000 (20%) of the National Bee Unit's budget. This would reduce the number of Bee Inspectors available to monitor diseases such as Foul Brood disease and the Varroa mite.

The National Bee Keeping Association had warned that this could lead to the collapse of many hives around the country. Clearly, this would have an effect on New Forest hives and should be of concern to everyone. The Leader therefore said that he was happy to express the Council's concern to the Government on this matter.

Question No. 2 from: Cllr Dr Mrs Whitehead to Cllr Holding (Health and Social Inclusion Portfolio Holder)

"Could the Portfolio holder for health update the Council on the current financial position of the New Forest Primary Care Trust, with reference to any services that may have their funding removed or significantly reduced?"

As the Portfolio Holder and Cllr Whitehead were absent from the meeting, the Chairman of the Council agreed that the Portfolio Holder should provide all members of the Council with a written response to this question at a later date.

59. DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS.

Members considered changes to the delegation of powers to officers to reflect a recent change in the establishment in the Housing directorate.

RESOLVED:

That the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, insofar as the functions are the responsibility of the Council, be amended by deleting all references to Assistant Director (Landlord Services) and Assistant Director (Strategic Services) and replacing them with Assistant Director (Housing Services) throughout the Scheme of Delegations and Proper Officer Appointments.

60. THE 2005/2006 COUNCIL TAX.

Cllr Kendal declared a personal interest as a member of Hampshire County Council. He did not consider his interest to be prejudicial. He remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be noted that at its meeting on 13 December 2004 the Council calculated the following amounts for the year 2005/06 in accordance with regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992: -

(a) £70,932.90 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its council tax base for the year.

(b) LOCAL COUNCIL AREA

ASHURST & COLBURY	920.50
BEAULIEU	516.00
BOLDRE	1,060.30
BRAMSHAW	341.60
BRANSGORE	1,852.80
BREAMORE	179.00
BROCKENHURST	1,766.60
BURLEY	777.10
COPYTHORNE	1,215.00
DAMERHAM	235.10
DENNY LODGE	155.40
EAST BOLDRE	397.80
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	591.00
EXBURY & LEPE	113.30
FAWLEY	4,820.80
FORDINGBRIDGE	2,296.70
GODSHILL	213.30
HALE	268.00
HORDLE	2,389.80
HYDE	501.90
HYPHE & DIBDEN	7,649.00
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	6,791.80
LYNDHURST	1,378.00
MARCHWOOD	1,979.60
MARTIN	189.30
MILFORD-ON-SEA	2,662.50
MINSTEAD	368.60

NETLEY MARSH	821.50
NEW MILTON	10,712.60
RINGWOOD	5,326.30
ROCKBOURNE	166.60
SANDLEHEATH	267.30
SOPLEY	305.20
SWAY	1,627.30
TOTTON & ELING	9,725.50
WHITSBURY	100.50
WOODGREEN	249.30
	70,932.90

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

2. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2005/06 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992: -
- (a) £109,130,210 being the aggregate of the amounts, which the Council estimates for the items, set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act.
 - (b) £86,074,040 being the aggregate of the amounts, which the Council estimates for the items, set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.
 - (c) £23,056,170 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
 - (d) £9,710,910 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant, increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its collection fund to its general fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Council Tax Surplus), and increased by the amount of any sum which the Council estimates will be transferred from its collection fund to its general fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Community Charge Surplus).

- (e) £188.14 being the amount at 2(c) above less the amount at 2(d) above, all divided by the amount at 10.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year.
- (f) £3,612,260 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (g) £137.21 being the amount at 2(e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2(f) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.

(h) **LOCAL COUNCIL AREA**

	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	162.20
BEAULIEU	148.84
BOLDRE	153.38
BRAMSHAW	147.46
BRANSGORE	178.88
BREAMORE	159.56
BROCKENHURST	161.27
BURLEY	143.64
COPYTHORNE	145.19
DAMERHAM	152.10
DENNY LODGE	150.08
EAST BOLDRE	149.78
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	154.98
EXBURY & LEPE	143.39
FAWLEY	221.61
FORDINGBRIDGE	198.25
GODSHILL	172.84
HALE	159.60
HORDLE	168.34
HYDE	149.16
HYTHE & DIBDEN	190.73
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	193.16
LYNDHURST	153.48
MARCHWOOD	227.59
MARTIN	155.70
MILFORD-ON-SEA	163.43
MINSTEAD	153.49
NETLEY MARSH	146.20

NEW MILTON	177.47
RINGWOOD	185.02
ROCKBOURNE	155.22
SANDLEHEATH	152.17
SOPLEY	184.72
SWAY	151.34
TOTTON & ELING	234.68
WHITSBURY	151.89
WOODGREEN	153.66

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2(g) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(i) **PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA**

These are the District plus Town/Parish Council elements only. See below and page 8 for the full amounts of Council Tax.

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	108.13	126.16	144.18	162.20	198.24	234.29	270.33	324.40
BEAULIEU	99.23	115.76	132.30	148.84	181.92	214.99	248.07	297.68
BOLDRE	102.25	119.30	136.34	153.38	187.46	221.55	255.63	306.76
BRAMSHAW	98.31	114.69	131.08	147.46	180.23	213.00	245.77	294.92
BRANSGORE	119.25	139.13	159.00	178.88	218.63	258.38	298.13	357.76
BREAMORE	106.37	124.10	141.83	159.56	195.02	230.48	265.93	319.12
BROCKENHURST	107.51	125.43	143.35	161.27	197.11	232.95	268.78	322.54
BURLEY	95.76	111.72	127.68	143.64	175.56	207.48	239.40	287.28
COPYTHORNE	96.79	112.93	129.06	145.19	177.45	209.72	241.98	290.38
DAMERHAM	101.40	118.30	135.20	152.10	185.90	219.70	253.50	304.20
DENNY LODGE	100.05	116.73	133.40	150.08	183.43	216.78	250.13	300.16
EAST BOLDRE	99.85	116.50	133.14	149.78	183.06	216.35	249.63	299.56
ELLINGHAM	103.32	120.54	137.76	154.98	189.42	223.86	258.30	309.96
EXBURY & LEPE	95.59	111.53	127.46	143.39	175.25	207.12	238.98	286.78
FAWLEY	147.74	172.36	196.99	221.61	270.86	320.10	369.35	443.22
FORDINGBRIDGE	132.17	154.19	176.22	198.25	242.31	286.36	330.42	396.50
GODSHILL	115.23	134.43	153.64	172.84	211.25	249.66	288.07	345.68
HALE	106.40	124.13	141.87	159.60	195.07	230.53	266.00	319.20
HORDLE	112.23	130.93	149.64	168.34	205.75	243.16	280.57	336.68

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
HYDE	99.44	116.01	132.59	149.16	182.31	215.45	248.60	298.32
HYTHE & DIBDEN	127.15	148.35	169.54	190.73	233.11	275.50	317.88	381.46
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	128.77	150.24	171.70	193.16	236.08	279.01	321.93	386.32
LYNDHURST	102.32	119.37	136.43	153.48	187.59	221.69	255.80	306.96
MARCHWOOD	151.73	177.01	202.30	227.59	278.17	328.74	379.32	455.18
MARTIN	103.80	121.10	138.40	155.70	190.30	224.90	259.50	311.40
MILFORD-ON-SEA	108.95	127.11	145.27	163.43	199.75	236.07	272.38	326.86
MINSTEAD	102.33	119.38	136.44	153.49	187.60	221.71	255.82	306.98
NETLEY MARSH	97.47	113.71	129.96	146.20	178.69	211.18	243.67	292.40
NEW MILTON	118.31	138.03	157.75	177.47	216.91	256.35	295.78	354.94
RINGWOOD	123.35	143.90	164.46	185.02	226.14	267.25	308.37	370.04
ROCKBOURNE	103.48	120.73	137.97	155.22	189.71	224.21	258.70	310.44
SANDLEHEATH	101.45	118.35	135.26	152.17	185.99	219.80	253.62	304.34
SOPLEY	123.15	143.67	164.20	184.72	225.77	266.82	307.87	369.44
SWAY	100.89	117.71	134.52	151.34	184.97	218.60	252.23	302.68
TOTTON & ELING	156.45	182.53	208.60	234.68	286.83	338.98	391.13	469.36
WHITSBURY	101.26	118.14	135.01	151.89	185.64	219.40	253.15	303.78
WOODGREEN	102.44	119.51	136.59	153.66	187.81	221.95	256.10	307.32

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 10.2(g) and 10.2(h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- That it be noted that for the year 2005/06 the Hampshire County Council, the Hampshire Police Authority and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown on the next page: -

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	579.60	676.20	772.80	869.40	1,062.60	1,255.80	1,449.00	1,738.80
HAMPSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY	75.84	88.48	101.12	113.76	139.04	164.32	189.60	227.52
HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY	34.74	40.53	46.32	52.11	63.69	75.27	86.85	104.22
	690.18	805.21	920.24	1,035.27	1,265.33	1,495.39	1,725.45	2,070.54

4. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2(i) and 3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2005/06 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -

PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	798.31	931.37	1,064.42	1,197.47	1,463.57	1,729.68	1,995.78	2,394.94
BEAULIEU	789.41	920.97	1,052.54	1,184.11	1,447.25	1,710.38	1,973.52	2,368.22
BOLDRE	792.43	924.51	1,056.58	1,188.65	1,452.79	1,716.94	1,981.08	2,377.30
BRAMSHAW	788.49	919.90	1,051.32	1,182.73	1,445.56	1,708.39	1,971.22	2,365.46
BRANGSORE	809.43	944.34	1,079.24	1,214.15	1,483.96	1,753.77	2,023.58	2,428.30
BREAMORE	796.55	929.31	1,062.07	1,194.83	1,460.35	1,725.87	1,991.38	2,389.66
BROCKENHURST	797.69	930.64	1,063.59	1,196.54	1,462.44	1,728.34	1,994.23	2,393.08
BURLEY	785.94	916.93	1,047.92	1,178.91	1,440.89	1,702.87	1,964.85	2,357.82
COPYTHORNE	786.97	918.14	1,049.30	1,180.46	1,442.78	1,705.11	1,967.43	2,360.92
DAMERHAM	791.58	923.51	1,055.44	1,187.37	1,451.23	1,715.09	1,978.95	2,374.74
DENNY LODGE	790.23	921.94	1,053.64	1,185.35	1,448.76	1,712.17	1,975.58	2,370.70
EAST BOLDRE	790.03	921.71	1,053.38	1,185.05	1,448.39	1,711.74	1,975.08	2,370.10
ELLINGHAM								
HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	793.50	925.75	1,058.00	1,190.25	1,454.75	1,719.25	1,983.75	2,380.50
EXBURY & LEPE	785.77	916.74	1,047.70	1,178.66	1,440.58	1,702.51	1,964.43	2,357.32
FAWLEY	837.92	977.57	1,117.23	1,256.88	1,536.19	1,815.49	2,094.80	2,513.76
FORDINGBRIDGE	822.35	959.40	1,096.46	1,233.52	1,507.64	1,781.75	2,055.87	2,467.04
GODSHILL	805.41	939.64	1,073.88	1,208.11	1,476.58	1,745.05	2,013.52	2,416.22
HALE	796.58	929.34	1,062.11	1,194.87	1,460.40	1,725.92	1,991.45	2,389.74
HORDLE	802.41	936.14	1,069.88	1,203.61	1,471.08	1,738.55	2,006.02	2,407.22
HYDE	789.62	921.22	1,052.83	1,184.43	1,447.64	1,710.84	1,974.05	2,368.86
HYTHE & DIBDEN	817.33	953.56	1,089.78	1,226.00	1,498.44	1,770.89	2,043.33	2,452.00
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	818.95	955.45	1,091.94	1,228.43	1,501.41	1,774.40	2,047.38	2,456.86
LYNDHURST	792.50	924.58	1,056.67	1,188.75	1,452.92	1,717.08	1,981.25	2,377.50
MARCHWOOD	841.91	982.22	1,122.54	1,262.86	1,543.50	1,824.13	2,104.77	2,525.72

Council**23 FEBRUARY 2005**

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
MARTIN	793.98	926.31	1,058.64	1,190.97	1,455.63	1,720.29	1,984.95	2,381.94
MILFORD-ON-SEA	799.13	932.32	1,065.51	1,198.70	1,465.08	1,731.46	1,997.83	2,397.40
MINSTEAD	792.51	924.59	1,056.68	1,188.76	1,452.93	1,717.10	1,981.27	2,377.52
NETLEY MARSH	787.65	918.92	1,050.20	1,181.47	1,444.02	1,706.57	1,969.12	2,362.94
NEW MILTON	808.49	943.24	1,077.99	1,212.74	1,482.24	1,751.74	2,021.23	2,425.48
RINGWOOD	813.53	949.11	1,084.70	1,220.29	1,491.47	1,762.64	2,033.82	2,440.58
ROCKBOURNE	793.66	925.94	1,058.21	1,190.49	1,455.04	1,719.60	1,984.15	2,380.98
SANDLEHEATH	791.63	923.56	1,055.50	1,187.44	1,451.32	1,715.19	1,979.07	2,374.88
SOPLEY	813.33	948.88	1,084.44	1,219.99	1,491.10	1,762.21	2,033.32	2,439.98
SWAY	791.07	922.92	1,054.76	1,186.61	1,450.30	1,713.99	1,977.68	2,373.22
TOTTON & ELING	846.63	987.74	1,128.84	1,269.95	1,552.16	1,834.37	2,116.58	2,539.90
WHITSBURY	791.44	923.35	1,055.25	1,187.16	1,450.97	1,714.79	1,978.60	2,374.32
WOODGREEN	792.62	924.72	1,056.83	1,188.93	1,453.14	1,717.34	1,981.55	2,377.86

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CL230205/MINUTES.DOC)

CLLR M J KENDAL - 2005/6 BUDGET SPEECH

Although this year we received slightly more in government grant than we did last year, we once again have received well below the average for district Councils. The fact that we have received slightly more this year than last year is almost certainly due to LGA (Local Govt. Assoc.) lobbying and the fact that the government is in an election year. Most of the extra one-off funding which government has given to local authorities has been in the areas of social services and education. As a district council we are not involved in either of these and therefore we have not been the recipients of special extra funding. In fact we have found that the indicative increase of £307,000 has been reduced with the final figure being some £296,000. This is less than 3.2%, very nearly the lowest, against an average increase of 6% in England.

Some of the extra pressures which the LGA found District Councils have had to face include:

- Continuing increases in waste and recycling costs
- increases in insurance
- the introduction of licensing and the cost associated with it
- increases in pension costs due to extra government taxation on pension funds and the change in revaluation methods. This has cost this council in excess of an extra £½m per annum compared to a few years ago.
- cost of anti-social behaviour and anti-social behaviour orders
- increased numbers of abandoned cars due to a lack of disposal sites and the need to deal with the toxic fluids in them.
- continuing costs associated with inspections and the CPA and Best Value reviews
- land charges reductions due to specialist companies using private searches on which fees are set nationally
- planning fees and planning delivery grant, whereas planning fees are capped, delivery grant is distributed by a formula

The LGA has made it quite clear that, with all these pressures facing district councils, the Government grants given to districts will not be enough to cope with these extra pressures and will make single digit increases in council tax very difficult for any district council.

With the diverse town and rural population which we service, with 5 recreational health centres to maintain, we have had to be particularly vigilant in examining our costs and the partnership programmes in which we are participating. We started this process some time ago and called for efficiency savings - from all sectors of the council - of at least 5% per annum. In addition as people left through resignation or retirement, we have reallocated duties and methods to ensure that we are using the most efficient combination of staff and computer systems in order to get savings. I estimate savings of the order of £1.2m per annum have been achieved in this way this year. These savings have enabled us to meet the additional cost pressures which the council has faced as a result of government diktats.

No area of our operations has remained untouched in our search for savings and all budgets have been reduced, including for example, our frequently criticised but largely misunderstood communications budget, has been reduced by some £15,000 which is more than 5%. However, further savings may yet arise as we explore further initiatives relating to joint working and outsourcing in a number of areas. We also believe that the National Park's

existence might produce savings to this council ultimately in respect of service delivery but the extent of these savings will depend to some degree on decisions which the National Park body will need to make with regard to partnership working. In any event such savings would not occur until the 2006/07 year and therefore have not been taken into account in framing this budget.

I mentioned the diverse nature of our district and that is reflected in the capital programme expenditure which we have embarked upon and which will continue over the next 4 years. Some examples of these are as follows:

- Refurbishment and replacement of public lavatories over a 4 year period is likely to cost over £850,000.
- Refurbishment programme of town and village centres and promenades such as Fawley, Totton, Marchwood, Hythe sea front, Milford-on-Sea sea front, is likely to cost a total of £3m of which our share will be about £1.2m
- The expansion of Lymington Recreation Centre involved us in a project of over £2.3m and our participation is £480,000.
- The refurbishment of Ringwood Recreation Centre involved us in expenditure of £500,000.
- We continue to be involved in the coastal defence protection programme and although most of the money for this is received by special grant from DEFRA involving millions, our liability is not likely to be less than £¼m over the next few years.

In setting our council tax, therefore, we have had to look ahead to the likely expenditure over the next few years and the degree to which this should be financed. Debt financing and lease financing is the most expensive form of financing for the council tax payer. It is one thing for a private company to borrow at a particular rate and through gearing to increase its activities so that it trades and makes a profit at a far higher percentage of capital employed than the borrowing rate. But there are only limited opportunities for a council, such as ourselves, to do this as we are not solely a profit making organisation. Rather than use council tax payers money to pay interest, we should therefore use internal financing methods wherever possible. We intend phasing out leasing of equipment for this reason. Many of the computers we have now, have been purchased and this will continue to be our policy in the future. The transition, however, requires extra capital for a short period of time. Hence we have increased the contribution to our capital programme from revenue in this particular year. We would have needed a higher figure had it not been for the excellent savings which we have achieved on previous years' budgets and I would hope that such savings will continue through the increased rate of efficiency of our excellent staff.

Our financial position is sound with our general fund reserve set at over £2m. However, that money is not to be used for our capital programme, rather it is there for any emergency or catastrophe requiring emergency measures. In these troubled times we do need to ensure that we are well prepared financially for the unimaginable. But ignoring the general fund reserve, the budget proposed today, together with the existing capital allocations, will be sufficient to meet our foreseeable capital programme needs as I have outlined earlier.

This capital expenditure in some cases improves our future revenue income but more than that, it will ensure that our district continues to provide excellent services to the residents of New Forest District by means of excellent health and recreation centres, up to date modern refuse vehicles, increased recycling, beautifully kept, pleasing town centres and sea front areas, so that the New Forest District continues to be an ideal place to live and work in. The proposed expenditure continues our primary key objectives. I have already mentioned how

the capital spend will flow through to service delivery which will assist in areas such as health improvement, and in areas such as refuse collection and cleanliness of our town centres, but also we will be meeting one of our key objectives in the field of crime and disorder by contributing directly to the additional Accredited Community Support Officers employed by Hampshire County Council and ourselves.

In the same way a partnership scheme with Hampshire County Council will assist in providing housing for key workers which is another one of our primary objectives. This money, arising from extra Council Tax on second homes, will supplement the existing allocation of over £3.1million being allocated to Social housing Grant by us. There is another £859000 which we have allocated to Private Sector Renewal Grant and Disabled Facilities Grant. This £4.0m is being financed almost entirely by expected capital receipts arising from proceeds from Right to Buy sales in this transitional year prior to losing out when Government's new pooling arrangements taking effect. In future years 25% of the expected sales receipts being about £1m may be retained for our use but the balance of the remaining £3 million will be taken by Government and will not be available for Housing. Future years' housing capital finance remains a Government mystery but our approach will be to attempt to re-invest as much as possible into new social housing grant as arises from Right to Buy sales .

In order to ensure that we keep the council tax as low as possible, we have also tried to ensure that each service charges a reasonable fee for the service item itself. Many services are met by a contribution from both council tax and direct payment for the service by the user. We have done our best to keep a reasonable balance between the two methods of payment for each of the services so that council tax payers do not heavily subsidise, for example, Dibden Bay golf course or those who do not have motor cars, do not subsidise car parking and so on.

And now a word on your favourite subject - car parking clocks one year on. Our overall transport budget remains high due to our generous travel tokens scheme. But we have turned the car parking account deficit into a surplus which helps fund this.

Last year the car parking clocks made a net contribution of over £280,000, contributions from meters were £680,000 and fines £54,000. Those who suggest that the car parking clock scheme should be scrapped in favour of so called free parking permits, will need to answer the question relating to the replacement of some £280,000 on our overall transport management budget. Officers have estimated that to replace that income through only increasing parking metered revenue would require meter rates to go up by an average of more than 50% and 100% in some cases. Clearly that could kill the goose that lays the golden egg as well as affecting the trading turnover of many of our village shops which this council has been anxious to protect over the last 6 years since this administration came into being. Prohibitive parking costs will also encourage people to take the chance of parking fines thus aggravating congestion. To replace the clock charge income received last year and to provide the extra administration cost which a free permit scheme based on post codes would require , is equivalent to an extra £5.15 per annum for a Band D council tax payer and that is the minimum amount by how much a free resident's permit would have increased the council tax last year. This year it would be £5.95. Such an increase would be borne by everyone, including the pensioner in Copythorne or Totton who does not have a motor car.

We are on target to meet the changes required in our car parking arrangements to allow for decriminalised parking. We and the County have allocated over a £¼m for implementation of this system which will see us taking over these duties from the Police. It will also enable us to provide more parking spaces on the streets of our towns and villages for short stay parking of different time durations. I am hopeful that the clock parking scheme will form the foundation for other traffic management regulations which will help direct the flow of tourists in the new National Park area, as well as removing the inconvenience to many of our town

centre users and motorists from congestion caused by parking offences. Exclusive employee parking permits in long term spaces will also be considered. However, I am not one of those that believe we should be increasing the price of permits or parking fees to such an extent that we penalise the motorist. I do not believe that parking costs on their own can influence the choice of transport. We shall most certainly wish to explore increasing the use of buses and the train service throughout the district. However, the current cost of those services remains too high in my view, and it is ridiculous that a young student or low earner has to pay as much as £8 to get from say Burley to say Lyndhurst by public bus transport. Until those costs are tackled there is no real inducement for people not to use motor cars. Accessibility, particularly between towns and rural villages, for our young people, and our pensioners in particular, remains a challenge which I hope this council will pay its part in addressing in conjunction with Hampshire County Council and insofar as it concerns them, the new National Park Authority.

I mentioned the fact that we cannot accurately assess the impact yet of the new National Park authority on our future expenditure. We have been working closely with Susan Carter and the preparations group in the establishment of the new National Park. Senior members of this council will be sitting on the National Park board. We hope that where we have the skills and experience for service delivery in this council, that the National Park body will use us. In this way we will be able to reduce the cost to the council tax payer and at the same time add value to conservation in the National Park designated area. It is our intention that this council will play the fullest possible part in co-operating with the new National Park for the benefit of all the people in the New Forest Park and the surrounding areas within the New Forest District. Initially there will be extra costs for this council in helping with establishment and also planning file and data transfer costs. Legislation makes it clear that many of these costs are not recoverable. So it would be folly to assume savings in our future expenditure as a result of the National Park designation at this stage.

Therefore, in order for our council to achieve the continuation of the services that I have mentioned earlier, we need to set a budget which requires a total expenditure of £19.44million. On our present council tax base, after allowing for a below average government grant, this requires a council tax of £137.21 for a Band D council tax payer which is an increase of just over £6 per annum when compared to last year. In the light of the pressures that we had to face and in the light of the capital programme which I have outlined, I am sure you will agree that an increase of 12p per week, an increase which is lower than some Parish Council increases and certainly lower than most other local authority increases, is justified. As a percentage it is 4.79% compared to an average district council tax increase of 5.6% in England. In fact it is in the lowest 20% of increases in England, despite our Government grant being amongst the very lowest. Indeed had we received the same amount per head of population that some other (notably Labour) District councils received we would not need to charge any council tax. So while I regret that this is above the government inflation rate of 3.5 % I repeat that if we had received only the average increase of government grant this year, we would have been able to keep our council tax increase to about 2½% with the measures we have taken.

Remember that the Audit Commission in their recent annual management letter in praising our financial management confirmed our excellence rating. In fact along with only four other Local Authorities in England, we have been invited to pilot a new framework for CPA 2005 in the field of resource management by the Audit Commission (we don't know if any other district councils have been asked). Not only do we have the capacity they seek, but in the past they have found that we are a council who knows what needs to be done, how to do it, and how to finance it at minimal cost to the council taxpayer.

Therefore, the fact that we have been able to make the efficiency savings in order to keep this council tax increase as low as it is is due almost entirely to the efforts of our excellent staff. In particular I would also like to thank Colin Wise, our Finance & Support Portfolio Holder, for his financial monitoring and Chris Malyon, for his financial expertise and support and both for their hard work. I would also like to thank the Review Panels and the Cabinet for their input.

It has been a long hard climb for them and their only consolation is that they have a couple of months before they start it again for the 2006/07 financial year - which, at this stage, looks even harder than the one which we have just been discussing. I believe that they, and the staff, the Cabinet and the various panels, have done the very best they can and I, therefore, ask you to accept the recommendations placed before you.

Cllr M J Kendal, Leader NFDC.
23/2/05

Cllr Mrs Robinson - Liberal Democrat Budget 2005.

Last year I put the Administration on notice. I warned you that during the course of 2004 I'd be keeping my eye on the revenue budget. You had large numbers of supplementary estimates totalling £541K yet had overall you underspent the budget. I told you

'basically not good business and must be tightened up'.

So have you?

No. In fact it's been even worse this year with a total of 87 revenue adjustments so far and yet again there's an under spend!

So what about this chronic under spend problem?

I have looked back over the figures for the past 3 years and every year since 2002/03, you have salted at least £300K of the public's money into the council's reserves. This was money you said you needed to provide services during the year. Let's look at this in more detail

2002/03

NFDC Council Tax up by	9.4%
You underspent by	£531,000 (equivalent of a 7.1% increase.)
Increase actually needed	2.3%.

2003/04

NFDC Council Tax up by	3.5%
You underspent by	£356,000 (equivalent of a 3.5% increase.)
Increase actually needed	0%

2004/05

NFDC Council Tax up by	4.9%
Underspend so far	£543,000 (equivalent of a 6.2% increase.)
Increase probably actually needed.	-1.3%

That's a total of £1,430,000 taken from our pockets and banked by NFDC!

And the council has had the benefit this year of a surplus on the car parking account of £261,000 generated by income from parking clocks and meters as well as fines and excess parking tickets.....much of which by the way came from local people who'd simply forgotten to display their clocks.

You've been overtaxing us year after year and instead of lightening the load on the taxpayer, you've been salting the surpluses away into the capital reserves. Instead of addressing this poor performance, Cabinet members having been wringing their hands and blaming the Government for not been generous enough with the New Forest! No wonder they don't take Local Government seriously up there in Westminster!

Despite all this hand wringing and shroud waving, NFDC's Government grant this year has been a healthy 3.3%. Is this an attempt to defuse the argument about the unfairness of Council tax during an election year? I'll leave you to work that one out yourselves.

So its not surprising that we believe a pattern is emerging. Based on recent trends it's worth taking a risk that a minimum of £300,000 revenue won't be spent. That's the equivalent of around 3% of the Administrations' proposed increase. So we will simply reduce the budget by this amount.

Saving. £300,000

I suppose it would be a popular move for us to just stop there. Many residents would be overjoyed at the thought of an increase of less than 2%, but there are a number of other changes that we would like to propose.

Firstly, other savings.

New Forest Committee.

This committee has been invaluable over the years in achieving so much to conserve and enhance the Forest. There are those who have begrudged the expenditure, but I believe that is unfair. However, with the emergence of the National Park Authority, which has its own nationally funded budget, it is time for residents to stop having to bear the cost exclusively.

We can save £31,000 if the NPA assumes responsibility.

Public Relations.....

Cunningly disguised this year as 'Communications.'

This function is still costing us far too much. The budget can be easily reduced by £15,000 without affecting the ability of the council to communicate its message.

Saving £15,000.

That's a total of £346,000 less expenditure than the Conservative groups' proposals, or around 3% of the proposed tax increase.

But we do believe that there are some proposals for extra expenditure that need to be considered.

Member grants.

Last year, a last minute proposal was made by the Leader for some Members to hold £500 each in 'Rural Assistance Grants.' The rationale for deciding which members would be entitled to this is confused and the fairness of coverage has been subject to debate. One member has had to try to allocate her grant fairly amongst 7 different parishes, whereas another parish defined as rural had exclusive access to grant from as many as 4 district councillors. At least one other councillor with a ward covering parts of 2 parishes had access to the grant but colleagues in the rest of one of the parishes, didn't.

Despite this shambolic start, looking at the sorts of organisations benefiting from the scheme and the variety of local initiatives which have benefited I'd say the Member grants scheme has been worthwhile and one which should be extended to all members. Extra expenditure yes, but it has a direct benefit for residents across the whole district.

This would cost an extra £17,000.

Transport for young people.

It is widely acknowledged that we ought to be providing more for young people to do. Surveys highlight that transport costs are a major factor in young people accessing leisure opportunities. There is a concessionary fare scheme covering part, but not all of the district and a proposal to extend the coverage of the scheme was withdrawn. We propose reinstatement of this funding.

Cost £6,000.

Beach huts.

Rental on Beach Huts is seeing an enormous increase this year, putting them even more out of reach for local families to enjoy. They are becoming an exclusive asset and this council is exploiting this rather than looking for a way to extend access to this facility. We believe that at the very least increases should be limited to inflation only.

Cost £30,000.

Community Responders.

Local Government has the power of promoting health and well being to residents and there is no better demonstration of this than in working in partnership with health organisations to save lives.

Hampshire Ambulance is actively promoting a partnership initiative to train and equip volunteers with defibrillators to respond to emergency calls where there is a suspected heart attack. This means that emergency assistance can be provided while an ambulance is on its way. This can be particularly vital in very rural areas. Community Responders already exist in some parts of the district but more are needed. £50,000 will provide funding to train and equip 5 more.

Cost £50,000.

So the cost of additional spending proposed by the Liberal Democrat group totals £103,000, or just over 1% on the districts' bill, but each of these bids is included in order to give direct benefit to local people and local communities.

In summary, the Liberal Democrat revenue budget as detailed would require a Council Tax of a Band D property of £133.79. An increase of just 2.18%.

But we're not going to stop there because we haven't lost sight of all that money stashed away as a result of overtaxing in the past 3 years.

Some of our communities are still waiting for CCTV to be installed. Residents of Hythe and New Milton have read the press releases extolling the benefits for crime reduction and detection in Lymington, Ringwood, Totton and Lyndhurst. Traders have heard from their colleagues in the other towns about how much safer their businesses are now and they think its only right that they should have CCTV too.

We propose taking a total of £200,000 over the next 2 years from the capital reserve to supply basic CCTV in Hythe and New Milton. If no other contributions are made to the reserve this will reduce it from £1.207 million to £1.007 million as at 1.4.09 but I suspect that residents would rather see their money actively improving their quality of life rather than sitting in the council's coffers!

It's bad enough that the county council has been building its own 'war chest' ready for this years' elections. We don't need to see this being copied here in the Forest.

So there it is Chairman, a budget that asks for the amount we really need and provides new services for all the district's residents. Admittedly it calls for more disciplined control over expenditure than we've seen in recent years and that is the challenge for the current Administration to achieve.

So I propose that for 2005/06 the capital programme is amended to include our proposal and a Council Tax of £133.79 for a band D property, an increase of just 2.18%, is levied for 2005/06.

Maureen Robinson. 17.2.05.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET 2005

2002/03

NFDC Council Tax Increase

9.4%

You underspent by

£531,000 (Equivalent to
7.1% increase)

Increase Actually needed

2.3%

2003/04

NFDC Council Tax Increase

3.5%

You underspent by

£356,000 (Equivalent to
3.5% increase)

Increase Actually needed

0.0%

2004/05

NFDC Council Tax Increase

4.9%

Underspent so far

£543,000 (Equivalent to
6.2% increase)

Increase Probably Actually needed

-1.3%

TOTAL UNDERSPEND

£1.43m

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET 2005
PROPOSED SAVINGS

	£
Underspend Trend	-300,000
New Forest Committee	- 31,000
Public Relations / Communications	-15,000
TOTAL SAVINGS	-346,000

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET 2005
EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS

	£
Rural Assistance Grants	17,000
Transport for Young People	6,000
Beach Hut Income	30,000
Community Responders	50,000
TOTAL	103,000

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET 2005
SUMMARY

	£
Total Proposed Savings	-346,000
Total Expenditure Proposal	103,000
TOTAL NET SAVINGS	-243,000

COUNCIL TAX INCREASE

	%
CABINET PROPOSAL	4.79
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PROPOSAL	2.18
COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION	-2.61