

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 2 March and 6 April 2005)

1. REVIEW OF HOUSING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY POST (REPORT A – 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 124)

The Cabinet has agreed that continued provision of £20,000 will be made in the Housing Revenue Account to fund the establishment of a post of Housing Occupational Therapist.

Occupational Therapists working in the field of disabled adaptations in housing are normally employed by Hampshire County Council and based in Social Services offices. This pilot scheme was set up as part of a drive to improve multi-disciplinary working and provide an integrated service, regardless of tenure.

This special post concentrates on the more complex cases and, being based at Appletree Court, allows closer liaison with both the Housing Improvements and Maintenance sections, and has resulted in a quicker, more efficient service. The Occupational Therapist also offers advice relating to housing applicants' medical situation and how this affects their housing needs. This allows more appropriate use of the housing stock by allocating adapted properties to people with identified needs.

As part of the stock refurbishment programme the Council now offers upgrades specific to a disabled tenant's needs. This process reduces the costs in adapting properties and seventy-three disabled tenants have so far been helped in this way.

2. THREE YEAR REVENUE AND CAPITAL SETTLEMENTS (REPORT B - 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 125)

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently published a consultation paper as part of the creating sustainable communities' programme that makes a number of proposals around the introduction of longer-term revenue and capital funding mechanisms.

The Government are intending to introduce the proposals from the 2006/2007 financial year. The Cabinet felt that there were a number of issues that would make this difficult. Under the new arrangements, there would be a requirement to set the Council Tax levels for 3 years. Whilst this could provide a degree of certainty to taxpayers, issues such as changes in Government legislation or interest rates would need to be accommodated. It would also be unreasonable not to expect budgets to be reviewed following a change of administration during the three-year period. Therefore, whilst the principle of a longer-term policy for funding was supported, there were still some outstanding concerns.

If a 3-year budget were set with a fixed Council Tax, a reserve figure might need to be built in to accommodate any changes that might occur within the life of that budget. This would artificially inflate the amount of Council Tax payable. The Government would need to give an assurance of their core funding settlement to councils and allow flexibility to review and amend budgets within the 3-year process, to take account of any new responsibilities imposed on councils.

The Council currently takes a 3-year view of its own budgets but only concentrates on the first year, due to the uncertainty of Government funding. The Cabinet would support a 3-year rolling programme whereby the first year was fixed but the second and third years were flexible and revised as they rolled forward. This would encourage councils to plan, not for a period of three specific years, but as an ongoing business.

The Cabinet also suggested that the opportunity should be taken to grant greater freedom to 'excellent councils' to allocate their funding as they chose, in line with local needs.

Subject to the comments contained in the Council's response to the Government's consultation paper, as contained within the Appendix to Report B and to the comments detailed above, the Cabinet has responded to the consultation document and approved the principle of three year revenue and capital settlements.

3. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED CONCERNING THE ADVERTISED DRAFT DISTRICT OF NEW FOREST (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) ORDER 2005 (REPORT C - 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 126)

At the present time only Amenity car parks and town/village car parks in Lyndhurst, Burley, Beaulieu and Milford On Sea are charged on Sundays during the period 1 March to 31 October. In January the Cabinet agreed that a draft order should be advertised the effect of which would be to extend the charging period to include Sundays in all charged town/village car parks.

As part of the order-making process, the Cabinet must consider all representations made. The Cabinet considered comments from Brockenhurst, Fordingbridge, Hale and Hythe Parish Councils, Ringwood Town Council and Hythe Centre Advisory Group.

In response to the suggestion that charging might deter tourists, the Cabinet noted that in the areas of the District where charging is already in place there is no evidence that this had led to a reduction in tourist activity. For those residents and tourists who have already purchased parking clocks these will be valid for town/village car park on Sundays.

Some concern was expressed at the cost of administering and enforcing the additional charges. The Cabinet noted that the costs will be kept within existing budget provision and undertaken within existing budget provision and shift patterns.

There were concerns that Sunday charging might cause displacement on to surrounding roads if this did prove to be a problem, then consideration will be given to amending the on-street regulations to the effect that on-street waiting restrictions apply on Sundays.

Where car parks are currently used for charitable events on Sundays, such as car boot sales, these will be able to continue.

In order to maintain consistency and avoid confusion, it is sensible to apply Sunday charging to all town/village car parks. There is no shortage of long stay parking on Sundays in any town/village centres, with the possible exception of Lyndhurst during the summer.

Having taken into account all of the comments received, the Cabinet has therefore confirmed the Draft District Of New Forest (Off-Street Parking Places) (Amendment No 2) Order 2005 which has the effect of introducing charges on Sundays to all existing charged Town and Village Car Parks.

4. PROJECT INTEGRA BUSINESS PLAN 2005-2010 (REPORT D - 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 127)

The Cabinet has endorsed the Project Integra Business Plan 2005 – 2010 subject to the correction of a number of minor arithmetical errors and to the Environment Portfolio Holder being satisfied as to a number of conditions being met.

Members were pleased to note that NFDC compared well with other local authorities in Hampshire. However, they agreed that the Annual Business Plan should take a more proactive and long-term view of the provision of waste infrastructure in Hampshire.

In NFDC, in order to increase the percentage of waste recycled even further, members agreed that customers needed to be encouraged to participate more in the Council's recycling schemes. Now that the 'clear sack' recycling scheme had been rolled out across the whole district, officers were focussing on areas of the district where there were low participation rates, to encourage more recycling. The clear sacks enabled refuse operatives to check the contents at the point of collection and thereby reject any that were contaminated.

Unlike most other authorities in Hampshire, NFDC still provided a weekly collection of residual and recyclable refuse. The Council was now starting to roll out a new scheme to collect green garden waste. This scheme would be self-financing and would not be a burden on Council Tax payers without gardens.

In considering the detail of the Business Plan, the Cabinet noted the relationship between recycling costs and the percentage of waste recycled, in particular they expressed concern at the potentially disproportionate increase in cost associated with increasing the District's existing high recycling rate. Members agreed to the funding outlined in the Project Integra Business Plan for support for the Project Integra's Executive Officer and the funding for projects.

Members expressed concern at the high levels of rejected material at the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) and fully supported the need for Project Integra and HCC to address this with Hampshire Waste Services/Onyx as a priority. A meeting had already taken place to start to address this issue. They agreed that the Annual Business Plan should include a strategy for dealing with the levels of rejected material at the MRF.

The Cabinet also agreed that, new legislation such as the Waste, Electronic and Electrical directive and the Bio Waste directive need to be clearly identified in the Annual Business Plan together with the implication of how those are going to be managed.

5. ADVERTISING ON PAY AND DISPLAY PARKING TICKETS (REPORT E – 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 128)

The Council use approximately 1,200,000 parking tickets per year costing in the region of £6,636. There is an opportunity to reduce this cost by allowing the rear of the ticket to be used for advertising.

The Council are obviously able to stipulate there should be no adverts relating to alcohol or tobacco or of that are of an offensive nature. However, the more restrictions that are placed on the type of advertising which is acceptable, the less income the Council will receive.

The Cabinet has therefore agreed that, in order to give the Council reasonable control of the advertising material, whilst at the same time raising a reasonable level of income, ticket suppliers will be allowed to advertise on tickets with restrictions on the advertising material, subject to the Portfolio Holder's approval being sought before the content of any advert is agreed.

6. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING SERVICE – CALL IN (REPORT F – 2 MARCH 2005) (MINUTE NO. 129)

In December 2004, criteria for the purpose of carrying out the Council's street naming and numbering function were agreed by the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder.

The decision was called in by one member of the Council and, in line with the Constitution, the matter was referred to the next available meeting of the Economy and Planning Review Panel for their comments. After detailed discussion the Panel was of the view that the new protocol was appropriate.

The proposal for naming and numbering streets offered a clearly defined criterion along with a process for resolving, what can be a contentious issue when some residents may wish for a street name to be changed.

The Cabinet noted the support given by the Panel and that their view is that the process to be followed for street naming and numbering is appropriate and should not be changed.

7. NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY – APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS (MINUTE NO. 130 – 2 MARCH 2005)

The Cabinet has appointed Cllrs Heron, Rickman, S S Wade and Mrs Wyeth as this Council's members on the New Forest National Park Authority.

8. DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 133 – 6 APRIL 2005)

The Cabinet has agreed a response to the draft South East Plan consultation document, as published by the South East England Regional Assembly.

In agreeing the response, members noted that the eastern part of New Forest District is in the defined South Hampshire sub-region. Most of the District is included in “central Hampshire and the New Forest”. A house-building rate of 1,000 p.a in central Hampshire and the New Forest has been recommended by a meeting of relevant Council Leaders (or their substitutes). This ties in with “sharper focus” options in the draft S E Plan that proposes a decrease in the rate of development outside the defined sub regions but a corresponding increase in the rate of development in the defined sub-regions.

In terms of the Strategy for South Hampshire the Cabinet noted the proposed response from PUSH and were advised that this would be considered at a Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) meeting later in the day. Members agreed there could be tensions developing between the Council’s stance and the higher growth levels proposed in recent work by DTZ consultants commissioned by PUSH.

The Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder said that overall he was satisfied with the Council’s response to the consultation document but would continue to evaluation the position as matters developed.

9. MILFORD ON SEA – SEAFRONT PHASE B (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 134 – 6 APRIL 2005)

In March 2004 the Cabinet agreed arrangements and funding for Phase A of the Seafrost refurbishment. Members have now recommended proposals for a phase B of the project to complete the scheme.

The Project Board has reviewed the project and has agreed that the following items should constitute a phase B :-

1.Under 5’s Play area	A strong favourite throughout the consultation with local people
2.Painting the beach hut backs and roofs	They have a strong visual impact and currently present a very tired prospect now the promenade is refurbished
3.Western car park wall incl. lighting	The wall is broken down and unsightly
4.Works to integrate with public conveniences contract	A small amount of work is needed to tidy up around the shared boundaries of the projects. This cost is less than originally estimated as the building has been moved forward on its “footprint”
5.Additional low-level bollard lighting	Included in Phase A works

6. Closing the gap between huts and Promenade	Revised cost estimate £90,000, but formal risk assessment confirms level of risk is low and acceptable, therefore Project Board has agreed not to pursue.
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The Project Board has been helpful in engaging local representatives on the scheme and has generated a shared understanding on design matters. The Cabinet supported the need to retain the Board to oversee the Phase B works.

Phase B is estimated to cost £78,000 which will enable provision of the items listed above. Whilst there is not currently specific provision in the 2005/2006 capital budget to cover these costs, the Cabinet has previously proposed that the capital receipts arising from the sale of new beach huts at Milford on Sea should be used to fund the completion of the Milford Promenade Improvement Scheme.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***The proposals for Phase B of the scheme to renovate Milford Seafront be approved;***
- (b) ***The process for funding Phase B be approved;***
- (c) ***That the provision of the under five's play area be subject to a formal Agreement with Milford Parish Council, which secures their interest in the long term tenure of the land and commitment to maintenance of the area; and***
- (d) ***The project management arrangements remain in place for the duration of the project and are used on an "as required" basis.***

10. CRITICAL ORDINARY WATER COURSES (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 135 – 6 APRIL 2005)

All Critical Ordinary Watercourses (COWS) in England and Wales are being reclassified as main rivers. Powers to deal with them are being transferred to the Environment Agency as part of a Government initiative to improve watercourse maintenance and reduce flood risk.

The Cabinet has agreed, subject to the acceptable outcome of the final negotiations, to an offer from the Southern region of the Environment Agency which would give the Council the opportunity to contract back maintenance of newly enained COWS for a period of two years starting April, 2006. In addition, the Cabinet has also agreed to pursue the possibility of NFDC forming a partnership with Eastleigh Borough Council to carry out contracted back watercourse maintenance in their area, subject to a sound business case existing for doing so.

Accepting the contracting back agreement offered by the Environment Agency will allow the Council to work with the Agency to maintain and improve critical ordinary watercourses in the district which will help the Council to reduce flood risk.

Working with Eastleigh Borough Council would help to fulfil the Council's aim to work with partners and would fit in well with the Gershon recommendations for local authority procurement.

The Council will lose Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as COW's transfer to the Environment Agency, although the level and timing of this loss cannot be calculated with any accuracy. Contracting-back would have no effect on RSG calculations, although any decision to do so should be taken in the knowledge that future changes in RSG methodology may impact on RSG received for non-COWS, at which point Members may wish to review the level of provision on the overall land drainage service.

11. COUNCIL'S KEY TARGETS (REPOR D) (MINUTE NO. 136 – 6 APRIL 2005)

That Cabinet has agreed the final assessment of performance against the 2004/05 key targets and has agreed the 2005/06 key targets for inclusion in the Council's Performance Plan.

The assessment of achievement against the 2004/05 key targets is a valuable measure of performance against the Council's corporate objective to maintain itself as an organisation of excellence. The Key Targets have been selected partly on the basis of their significant impact on the community or the organisation. They also contain many examples of partnership working.

The Key Targets will be included in the Council's Performance Plan to be agreed by the Council shortly.

12. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2004 TO FEBRUARY 2005 (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 137 – 6 APRIL 2005)

The Cabinet considered the forecast budget variations of all portfolios and committees from the approved original estimates for 2004/05.

Members noted that the new proactive financial reporting arrangements were working well and information on the Council's financial position was much more transparent. There was currently a substantial underspend on budgets for 2004/05 and this would need to be built into expenditure plans where possible for 2006/07.

For the General Fund the total new variations to February show an estimated reduction in net expenditure of £185,000 bringing the total reduction for the year to £728,000. The actual expenditure at the end of February is £692,000 below the profiled budget expenditure.

In relation to the Leisure portfolio it was noted that the purchase of additional golf buggies at Dibden Golf Centre in the current financial year would not be possible. Therefore the £12,000 funding will be transferred to reserves to enable the purchase to take place in 2005/06.

For capital expenditure (excluding housing) the new variations show a decrease in 2004/05 expenditure of £534,000, but excluding items of re-phasing, virement, developers' contributions and external funding, there is a decreased call on the Council's capital resources of £10,000.

For Housing capital expenditure the reported variations show a decrease in 2004/05 expenditure of £341,000, but excluding items of re-phasing and external funding there is a decreased call on the Council's capital resources of £207,000.

The reported variations on the Housing Revenue account show a decrease in 2004/05 expenditure of £112,000. Whilst the actual net expenditure at the end of February is £1,282,000 below the profiled budget expenditure, this principally reflects variations in the timing of expenditure and income, in particular delays in payments for repairs and maintenance expenditure.

The budget for Commercial Services shows a net surplus of £103,362 for the period April to January 2005. The estimated allocation of this is £101,725 to the General Fund and £1,637 to the Housing Revenue account.

The Finance and Support Portfolio Holder said that he was pleased with the way in which the financial reporting system was developing. As the system became more refined the Council would gain a better control of its expenditure and knowledge of income.

RECOMMENDED:

(a) That the following supplementary estimates be approved:

- **£43,000 for increased Catering costs / income shortfalls**
- **£21,000 for increased CCTV costs**
- **£183,000 due to increased Health and Leisure Centre costs/shortfall in income**
- **£25,000 in respect of Beach Hut income**

(b) That a virement of £57,000 from Revenue Contributions to Major Repairs to the Disabled Facilities Grant budget be approved.

13. PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK FOR 2005/06 (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO. 138 – 6 APRIL 2005)

The Cabinet considered the Planned Maintenance Improvement Programme 2005/2006 and the implications of a proposed increase in the Cyclical Maintenance Budget and equivalent decrease in the Planned Maintenance budget.

The Council's budget includes a total of £4,750,000 for the Planned Maintenance Revenue Programme and £1,009,000 for cyclical maintenance for 2005/06. The Cabinet is now recommending the agreement of schemes under general headings of expenditure for the budget to ensure progress with the Decent Homes Standard and to maintain the Council's housing stock.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the cyclical maintenance budget be increased by £188,000 to £1,197,000 with a corresponding decrease in the Planned Maintenance Programme to £4,562,000; and**
- (b) That the schemes listed in Appendix I be approved as the planned maintenance and improvements programme and cyclical maintenance programme for 2005/2006.**

14. DELIVERY OF PLANNING SERVICES IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AND THE REMAINING NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO. 139 – 6 APRIL 2005)

The Cabinet has agreed that the New Forest National Park Authority be requested to enter into detailed discussions about a partnership approach for the provision of planning services with each authority sharing a joint team of planning officers and support staff.

The Cabinet considered options for the provision of planning services when the New Forest National Park took up its functions. The Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Review Panel has also met and supported the recommendation before the Cabinet.

The New Forest National Park Authority will become the sole local planning authority for the National Park from 1 April 2006. In doing so it will take over the local and strategic planning authority powers from the existing local authorities in the area.

In addition to development control, the National Park Authority (NPA) will be entirely responsible for the plan making functions in its area. It will have a seat on the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and will be responsible for the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). It will also take over from the two County Councils the responsibility for minerals and waste planning. It can choose to carry out some or all of its plan making functions independently or jointly with other authorities. New Forest District Council has submitted a Local Development Scheme (LDS) with a programme of future plan making to the Government Office for the South East. This LDS includes proposals for some statutory Local Development Documents to be prepared jointly by New Forest District Council and the National Park Authority. While this will have to be formally considered by the new NPA, the Acting Chief Executive to the NPA has provisionally supported these proposals as being an arrangement she would recommend to the NPA.

Given that New Forest District Council is most affected by the creation of this new authority it has set up a Members Working Group to consider the implications on a range of services. This group has considered the delivery of planning functions on two occasions and its findings, conclusions and recommendations has formed the basis of the report to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet agreed that there are many advantages to be gained by the adoption of a partnership approach and the setting up of an independent joint technical officer team to work for both authorities. There are some disadvantages, but it is believed that these can be largely overcome by the detailed consideration of management arrangements and the way in which the partnership team is set up. Overall the benefits of a partnership approach are considered to substantially outweigh the disadvantages from both authorities' points of view.

Members noted that the option to pursue a partnership approach to the provision of planning services was the start of a process of negotiation that would consider the interests of the Council as a whole, together with the wider interests of all the parties concerned.

15. PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS LIAISON PROCEDURE (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 140 – 6 APRIL 2005)

The Cabinet has reviewed the Parish and Town Councils liaison procedure and has agreed to the continuation of the liaison procedure as amended. The procedure will subsequently be the subject of future annual review, reported to the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee and the Economy and Planning Portfolio holder.

Members noted that the procedure had been very successful and had resulted in a high level of satisfaction from local councils. As a result the amount of items considered by the Planning Development Control Committee had also reduced.

Members agreed that it would be useful for Planning Development Control Committee members to receive the same background information on planning applications that was now given to local councils. Officers agreed to look at the best way of providing this, using electronic means where possible.

16. MEALS ON WHEELS – MEAL PRICE 2005/06 (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO. 141 – 6 APRIL 2005)

Hampshire County Council has set the 2005/06 'county price' for Meals on Wheels at £2.70 with effect from 5 April 2005. The Cabinet has agreed that the New Forest Meals on Wheels should be increased by 10p to match this. This increase had already been included in the Council's 2005/06 agreed budget.

The Housing, Health and Social Inclusion Review Panel has also supported this increase but has asked that there should be consultation with HCC to agree a more strategic, longer term basis for setting the Meals on Wheels price in future years.

**Cllr M J Kendal
CHAIRMAN**

APPENDIX I

2005/2006 PLANNED MAINTENANCE BUDGET SUMMARY

1 PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET

Heating Replacements	750,000	
Electrical rewiring	300,000	
Roof renewal	0	
Replacement Doors	90,000	
Repointing	150,000	
Security Works	20,000	
Sheltered Housing Works	350,000	
To include refurbishment at Barfields		
Replacement windows	60,000	
Kitchen and bathroom modernisations	2,000,000	
Refurbishments	100,000	
Provision of individual hardstandings	0	
Estate improvements	0	
Miscellaneous	742,000	
TOTAL PLANNED MAINTENANCE BUDGET		4,562,000

2 CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE

a)	Gas appliance servicing	608,000	
b)	Fire alarm servicing	35,000	
c)	Lift servicing	37,000	
d)	Solid fuel servicing	10,000	
e)	Portable Appliance Testing	3,000	
f)	Smoke detector servicing	35,000	
g)	PVCu window servicing	50,000	
			778,000
ii)	External decoration		330,000
iii)	Internal decoration		
a)	Sheltered housing	40,000	
b)	Flats, communal areas	10,000	
c)	Elderly persons decorations	30,000	
d)	Hostels	9,000	
			89,000
TOTAL CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET			1,197,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE			5,759,000