

18 JULY 2005

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 18 July 2005.

- p Cllr Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton - Chairman
- p Cllr D N Scott - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p G Abbott
- p 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 L T Dunsdon
- p M H G Fidler
- p Ms L C Ford
- e 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
- p Mrs M D Holding
- p J M Hoy
- e Mrs M Humber
- p J A G Hutchins
- p M J Kendal
- p Mrs B M Maynard
- e Mrs M McLean
- e M J Molyneux

Councillors:

- 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
- e N E Scott
- p Lt Col M J Shand
- p S A Shepherd
- p Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs S I Snowden
- p M H Thierry
- p A R Tinsley
- p D B Tipp
- p C R Treleaven
- p Mrs B Vincent
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p G M Walmsley
- p J G Ward
- p A Weeks
- p Dr M N Whitehead
- p C A Wise
- e P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, J Mascall, C Malyon, R J Millard, Miss G O'Rourke and Mrs R Rutins.

15. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the name of Cllr Parkes being included in the list of those present, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2005, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Neath disclosed a personal interest in item 4 of the Cabinet's report (Minute No. 20), as the District Council's representative on the New Forest Villages Housing Association Management Committee.

17. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Write on your Doorstep Competition

The Chairman reported that he had been honoured to attend at Ottakars Bookshop in Lymington on 2 July to present the prizes for a "Write on your Doorstep" competition. One of the prize winners, Lewis Chandler, from Applemore College, who had won third prize in the 13-16 age group for "The Kiss", had been unable to attend that ceremony but was present this evening. The Chairman presented Lewis with a certificate and £30 in book tokens and congratulated him on his achievement.

Appeal for Toys and Games

On behalf of the Crime & Disorder Review Panel, Cllr Hibbert appealed for donations of toys and games suitable for age 8 and over, for use at the two refuges in the District supported by the District Council for victims of domestic violence. Other consumable items such as pens and paper used for craft activities would also be gratefully received. Any donations could be left with the Chairman's Personal Assistant, Helen Saunders.

Bombing Incidents in London

The Chairman referred with great regret to the bombing incidents in London on 7 July. He had written to both the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and the Lord Mayor of the City of London, conveying the sympathies of the people of the New Forest District. He had had a reply from the Lord Mayor, thanking him for the kind words of sympathy and comfort sent on behalf of the citizens of the New Forest. He had commended the calm and disciplined reaction of the emergency services and many others who had worked together to deal with the tragedy. The Lord Mayor had said that the support that had been shown from around the country and the world had been greatly encouraging.

All present stood in silence as a mark of respect to those who had died and who had been bereaved.

18. REPORT OF GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE – MEETING HELD 24 JUNE 2005.

The Chairman, Cllr Dow, presented the report of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee dated 24 June 2005. On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted:

(a) Item 1 – Deregulation and Accessibility of Hackney Carriages

The view was expressed that members of the Committee had not fully appreciated the implications of their decision to commission a survey into unmet demand for taxi services and then to consider further whether or not to continue to exercise control over numbers. Representations regarding the decision had been made by the Taxi Trade to a number of members.

The Chairman of the Committee reported that he had discussed the matter with the officers and had found that the resolution of the Committee to commission a survey had not yet been implemented. There was no urgency about the matter. With the consent of other members of the Committee, the Chairman agreed to request the officers not to implement the decision of 24 June, and to arrange for the matter to be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Committee on 16 September.

(b) Item 2 – Proposed Joint Warranting Project between the Health and Safety Executive and the Council

A member referred to the fact that the report on this matter to the Committee on 24 June had stated that the Portfolio Holder had “already signed the partnership statement on behalf of New Forest District Council”. He asked the Chairman of the Committee whether the Portfolio Holder had followed the requirements of Chapter 6 of the Constitution relating to decisions by members of the Executive before entering into the agreement.

The Committee Chairman reported that matters under the Health and Safety Acts were not an Executive function (apart from the health and safety of employees) but were matters on which the General Purposes and Licensing Committee made recommendations to the Council. The Council was now in fact being asked to decide whether or not it wished to sign up to the joint warranting project. The “agreement” signed by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Inclusion was only a Statement of Intent that the Council was committed to working in closer partnership with the Health & Safety Executive.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Inclusion reported that the Statement of Intent had been the culmination of a protracted period of work within LACORS aimed at better ways of working. The health and safety of employees was also part of the work being undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted, but that it be noted that the subject matter of Item 1 will be reconsidered by the Committee.

19. REPORT OF NFDC/TVBC COMMERCIAL SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE – MEETING HELD 9 JUNE 2005.

The Chairman of the Joint Committee, Cllr Thierry, presented the report of the meeting held on 9 June 2005.

Item 2 – Director’s report for the period 1 April to 31 March 2005

The Chairman of the Joint Committee reported that a Goods Vehicle Operators’ Licence had been granted for the site at Yokesford Hill, Romsey, and that work was in progress to co-ordinate a move to that site.

With regard to garden waste in New Forest District, he reported that the number of new collection sacks sold had risen to 3,155. The average tonnage of green waste collected via this method in New Forest District had risen to 28.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

20. REPORT OF CABINET – MEETINGS HELD 4 MAY, 1 JUNE AND 4 JULY 2005.

The Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the report of the meetings held on 4 May, 1 June and 4 July 2005.

On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted:

Item 1 – Rural Housing Development Strategy

Cllr Neath disclosed a personal interest in this matter as the Council’s representative on the New Forest Villages Housing Association Management Committee. He did not consider that his interest was prejudicial and he remained at the meeting. There was no discussion on the matter.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations adopted.

21. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

22. QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A.

Question No. 1 from: Cllr M S Wade to Cllr Beck (Crime and Disorder Portfolio Holder)

“Would the Portfolio Holder for Crime and Disorder say how the level of domestic violence in the New Forest compares with domestic violence nationally?”

Answer:

The Crime & Disorder Portfolio Holder reported that of all violent crime in England and Wales, domestic violence accounted for 16%. Last year 120 women and 30 men had lost their lives as a result of domestic violence. The recent crime audit for the New Forest had indicated a total of 445 domestic assaults in the year 2003-04. The total of physical assaults for this period was 2,365. There was therefore a proportion of 18% domestic assaults, 2% above the national average. Of the physical assaults in the New Forest, 821 had been committed by persons not known to the victim. Based on the figures for the New Forest, persons were twice as likely to be assaulted by their partner than by a stranger. It was believed that a maximum of 1 in 4 domestic assaults were actually reported. Victims of domestic abuse involved people from all walks of life and might include threats or acts of violence, threats against children, or children threatening parents and other members of the family, withholding money for food, clothes or household items, restricting freedom of movement, restricting choice in everyday decisions, stalking and rape and many other incidents that sadly in a number of cases were accepted as the normal way of life. Domestic violence or abuse was a very serious matter which must concern every member of the Council. It was on a number of occasions fuelled by substance misuse.

As a supplementary question Cllr M S Wade asked what New Forest District Council, as a local authority, was doing to address the issue.

In reply, the Portfolio Holder reported that in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary, New Forest District Council was part-funding the post of Domestic Violence Co-ordinator. The Council was funding 75% of the cost and the Police 25%. The postholder's key tasks were to work with victims of domestic violence; review and co-ordinate police activity with regard to domestic abuse incidents; give advice and input information to police officers; receive feedback from police officers; and highlight areas of risk to victims, witnesses and police officers.

Members of the Council served on the New Forest Domestic Violence Forum. These members had expressed concern at the management of the Forum. Three cross-party members of the Crime and Disorder Review Panel were currently conducting an in-depth review of the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator post. This included the apportionment of funding and the location of the post-holder. It was anticipated that their findings would be reported to the Cabinet in late autumn.

Question No. 2 from: Cllr Mrs Smith to Cllr Kendal (Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder)

“Could the Leader of the Council, given his responsibility for monitoring Human Resources issues, please explain how services can be maintained at an acceptable level if it is proving difficult if not impossible to recruit staff in certain areas?”

Answer:

The Leader of the Council reported there was no significant general problem with recruitment to vacancies in the Council's workforce, with most jobs being filled from the first advertisement. There were some areas, such as Environmental Health, Planning and Building Control, where there were recruitment difficulties but within these areas a number of initiatives were being pursued. In Environmental Health the Council was funding an Environmental Health Technician to achieve the environmental health officer qualification. Human Resources were working with other Councils within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to look at issues such as joint recruitment using the internet, working with professional bodies and training institutes to increase the availability of certain groups of staff, and getting better value from consultants by collective contracts. The consultants were due to report to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Chief Executive's Group in a few months' time.

In a supplementary question, Cllr Mrs Smith asked how this Council was addressing the problem of potential recruits being attracted by other organisations offering better packages, including "golden hellos". The Leader of the Council replied that, despite some difficulties, local government was still seen to be an attractive employer because of good terms and conditions of employment, such as the final salary pension scheme. However, the shortage of planning officers in the area was likely to worsen because of the decision of the New Forest National Park Authority not to delegate their planning functions to NFDC.

Question No. 3 from: Cllr Hickman to Cllr Thierry (Environment Portfolio Holder)

"Could the Portfolio Holder for the Environment please explain briefly how the shortfall in achieving recycling targets is being addressed, and explain the measures being taken to address current problems at the new MRF in Alton which are causing significant quantities of recyclable materials submitted by NFDC in clear sacks to be rejected?"

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder reported that he had recently written to the Head of Waste Management at Hampshire County Council to express his concern about the level of rejected material at the Alton MRF, and the effectiveness of sorting of the clear recycling sacks. Recent spot checks had shown that the quality of recyclables collected in the clear sacks was good. The matter was also being taken up through Project Integra's Scrutiny Committee.

In reply to a supplementary question from Cllr Hickman regarding when and how a wider range of recyclable items might be collected through kerbside collections, the Portfolio Holder said that while more certainly needed to be done, there was difficulty in establishing viable markets for recyclable materials. He pointed out that there were a number of "bring" sites for recyclables not collected at the kerbside, and these were extremely successful. The 100th such site in the District had recently been opened – the highest number of any waste collection authority in the County. The position was constantly being monitored by both Project Integra and this Council's Environment Review Panel, through its Refuse Collection and Recycling Working Party.

Question No 4 from: Cllr Mrs McLean to Cllr Thierry (Environment Portfolio Holder)

In Cllr Mrs McLean's absence, this question was deferred until the next meeting.

Question No. 5 from: Cllr Weeks to Cllr Thierry (Environment Portfolio Holder)

"Given the fact that Totton and Eling is the largest town in New Forest District with 1/6th of the Councillors representing Totton Wards, please would the Portfolio Holder for the Environment explain why he agreed to the closure of public toilets in Testwood Recreation Ground and why he continues to support them remaining closed despite various verbal and written assurances over the years from officers that they would remain open?"

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder said that he failed to understand the link between the number of District Councillors in an area and the number of public toilets provided. He reported that within the Totton area the District Council owned five toilet blocks. The toilet referred to by Cllr Weeks had not been a high use facility and had been closed on 16 June 2004 following significant vandalism over a protracted period. Vandalism had included daily damage to urinals, toilet pans and washing facilities; continual removal of roofing tiles; arson; broken windows; lighting; removal of brickwork; and graffiti. The Council had invested significant sums of money to repair the vandalism. Repair costs remained high because the vandalism was on-going. The cost of the provision of a new public convenience would be in the region of £200,000. However, there were toilet facilities within the pavilion owned by Totton & Eling Town Council on the site which could be made available to the general public. The Town Council had chosen not to do this.

In a supplementary question Cllr Weeks asked why the provision of adequate toilet facilities on the site were not seen as a priority because of the existence of the paddling pool. In reply the Portfolio Holder reiterated the cost to the Council of dealing with the constant vandalism that occurred. A new facility, if provided, was likely to be exposed to similar high levels of vandalism. The Council had a limited budget for public conveniences and he tried to ensure that the available funds were spent in the most effective way. He repeated that there were alternative toilet facilities on the site that Totton & Eling Town Council could make available for public use.

Question No. 6 from: Cllr Mrs Robinson to Cllr Kendal (Policy and Strategy Portfolio Holder)

"What action has been taken to correct the incorrect and apparently unchecked information about the disposal of glass in clear recycling bags that was published in 'New Forest Now'?"

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder regretted that, despite at least three proof checks, incorrect information had been contained in a quote from a member of the public that had not been picked up. New Forest Now was a magazine devised to give a glimpse of the services on offer to the people of the New Forest and what they would be able to see and participate in at the New Forest Show. Further down the article was a full explanation of the recycling services on offer and was headed: 'You can recycle...' followed by what should be put in clear sacks and what should be deposited at the recycling centre that is: glass bottles, jars, glassware etc. Information was being produced for the show to ensure that any confusion caused was dealt with and that the public were left in no doubt about what they should do with glass and that they should not put it in clear sacks.

As a result of the problem being brought to the attention of the Head of Communications at an early stage by Cllr Mrs Smith, the process of proofing publications of this sort had been reviewed and changes made to ensure that errors of this nature did not arise in future.

As a supplementary question, Cllr Mrs Robinson asked what steps were being taken to ensure the safety of the refuse operatives, who might suffer injuries as a result of glass being placed in the sacks for recyclables.

In reply the Portfolio Holder reported that the fact that the recyclable material was in clear sacks enabled the refuse operatives to see what each sack contained. If glass or other non-recyclable material were placed in a clear sack it would be visible to the refuse operative and the matter could then be followed up. Of more concern to the Portfolio Holder were broken glass, bottles and other dangerous material being placed in the pink sacks, where these items were not visible to the operatives.

23. MEETING DATES FOR 2006/07 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**RESOLVED:**

That meetings be held on the following Mondays at 6.30 p.m.

15 May 2006 (already agreed)

26 June 2006 (special meeting to consider the Performance Plan)

31 July 2006

18 September 2006

30 October 2006

18 December 2006

26 February 2007

23 April 2007

21 May 2007 (annual meeting)

CHAIRMAN