

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 3 August 2005)

1. LAND AT CHALLENGER WAY, DIBDEN (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 28)

The Cabinet previously decided that, subject to the grant of planning permission, this site should be used for a mixture of community use and housing.

With respect to the community use, it has not been possible to date to find an organisation that wishes to erect a building such as a day care centre, church or community centre. Until such a user comes forward it has been decided to explore the option of managing that part of the land as public open space. Hythe and Dibden Parish Council have indicated that they may be prepared to manage the land in the interim period.

Although the original Cabinet decision was that the residual land should be disposed of for market housing, in February this year it was decided that the land should be used to meet one of the Council's key objectives though the provision of affordable housing, which would include an element of key-worker housing to be provided by the County Council. The area of land passed to the County Council would realise a capital receipt, equivalent to the market value, while, in accordance with normal practice, the land to be used for affordable housing would be passed to a Housing Association, at no cost.

The Cabinet now understands that the County Council wishes to provide only one or two key worker homes, instead of the 5 originally envisaged. In the light of this, and the need if possible to retain capital receipts, members requested that the option of disposing of the residual plots, designated for key worker housing but no longer needed for that purpose, for market housing should be evaluated. This option may be contrary to planning policy for the site, but it has been agreed that this should at least be investigated. On the same basis, the Cabinet is seeking confirmation that none of the land designated for open space can be reallocated for open market housing.

RECOMMENDED:

(a) That, subject to further discussions to establish the planning situation, the option of disposing of the balance of the 5 housing plots designated for key worker housing, but not needed by the County Council for that purpose, for private sector housing, in order to maintain the capital receipts to this Council, be investigated. If this is not acceptable in planning terms the key worker housing not required by the County Council should be re-allocated as general needs affordable housing;

(b) That, in the light of this investigation and subject to:

- (i) the subsequent granting of planning permission, and**
- (ii) funding being available to implement the scheme;**

the housing land be disposed of to one of the Council's partner housing associations to provide a mix of affordable rented, shared ownership/equity and HCC key worker housing broadly in the proportions as set out in Scenario 1 of Report A to the Cabinet (final

details to be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing) for the following consideration:

- ***Nil cost for any general needs affordable housing (rent or shared ownership/equity);***
 - ***Market value for key worker or open market housing (with the receipt being allocated to the Council's social housing grant budget for the provision of new affordable housing);***
- (c) That the area of land intended for a community use building be landscaped and set aside as open space, pending a provider being found.***

2. HOUSING STRATEGY AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 29)

The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) has confirmed that both the housing strategy and the business plan meet the required standard to be deemed fit for purpose and they have consequently signed off the stock options appraisal. GOSE will continue to work with this Council to review progress on meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

Expenditure within the strategy, particularly to provide affordable housing, is based upon the current level of receipts under the Right to Buy Scheme. If receipts through this source continue to fall, a report will be bought back to Cabinet to decide how to respond to the shortfall.

Members noted, on page 22 of the Housing Strategy Summary, the proposal to use planning powers to promote the building of small market dwellings that are more affordable by local people and designed to meet local demand. This option, which tends to promote higher density developments, will not however be appropriate in all settlements and due regard must be taken of the character of the surrounding area.

It was reported that the Housing Corporation are proposing to tell local authorities which partner Housing Associations they might use. In New Forest District, over a number of years, the Council has developed a range of partnerships with Housing Associations which share similar values and objectives. There is very considerable concern at any proposal to remove local discretion.

Members discussed the concerns raised by Mrs White, one of the Tenants' Representatives, regarding changes in the way in which social care for elderly persons in their own homes will be funded; and also about health service proposals which may lead to the closure of cottage hospitals. She felt it was particularly unfortunate that New Milton, which was the second largest population centre in the district, had not at the time of the Cabinet meeting, been consulted about the potential closure of the Milford-on-Sea Hospital, which was the closest to New Milton.

Concerns within the local population about the way in which social care is funded may be unfounded, and caused by a misunderstanding about the way in which payments will be made in future. It was not intended to withdraw any services. It was agreed that an item would be included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Housing, Health and Social Inclusion Review Panel to update everyone on the changes to social care funding through Hampshire County Council.

With respect to the potential closure of the Milford-on-Sea Hospital, consultations with the population in New Milton would start shortly. It was important however that the Primary Health Care Trust was made aware that the cottage hospitals served more than just the immediate local population. One of the arguments being used for closure was that not all areas had the benefit of a community hospital and there was a disproportionate service. This was not the perception of local populations which were drawn from a much wider area than the initial consultations carried out by the Health Care Trust suggested.

Discussions were continuing with the Primary Health Care Trust and the County Council with the objective of ensuring that the long term care of the local population will not suffer as a result of any changes. The District Council will be considering its formal response to the PCT consultation at the next meeting of the Cabinet in September.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council's Housing Strategy, as amended on page 22 by the insertion of the words 'where appropriate' with respect to the use of planning powers to secure small scale affordable housing, and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, be adopted.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2005 TO JUNE 2005 (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 30)

Full details of the current position are set out in appendices to Report C to the Cabinet. It was noted that any budget increase in excess of £20,000 required the consent of Council.

The Cabinet was advised that the variations within the current budget were being scrutinised to try to consolidate them into next year's spending proposals.

With regard to the revised capital expenditure set out in Appendix 2 to Report C, it was noted that Financial Regulations had had to be suspended in order to incur £51,000 in respect of urgent works to sports hall floors. This matter is reported to the Council in accordance with Financial Regulation 2.4.1.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the items set out in the revised General Fund budget in Appendix 1 to Report C be approved to include a supplementary estimate of:***
 - (i) *£20,000 for an income shortfall on beach hut assignment fees (this is the 2005/06 effect of a supplementary estimate already approved by the Council in respect of 2004/05 on 25 April 2005 as a result of a recommendation by the Cabinet based on Report E submitted to its meeting of 5 April).***
 - (ii) *£32,000 in respect of Dibden Golf Centre Catering budgets (Detailed Cabinet Report B; 5 May 2005);***
- (b) *That the revised capital expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 to Report C be approved; and***

(c) *That the suspension of Financial Regulations in order to incur expenditure of £51,000 for urgent works to sports hall floors be noted.*

4. SUSPENSION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS – APPELMORE HEALTH AND LEISURE CENTRE (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 31)

The Cabinet noted the decision taken by the Director of Resources to suspend financial regulations in order to allow the Council to take advantage of the 'inclusive fitness initiative' which was funded by Sport England to improve accessibility to areas such as gymnasiums for disabled people.

Members warmly welcomed this initiative and thanked the officers for their hard work in securing this funding opportunity.

5. REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT REVIEW PANEL – PLANNING POLICIES TO AID RECYCLING (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 32)

The Cabinet has supported a request by the Environment Review Panel to bring forward policies within the developing local development framework to promote the provision of infrastructure to make recycling easier. The officers have been requested to come back with more detailed proposals on policies to promote recycling activity, preferably early in the process by means of an informal advice note or a Supplementary Planning Document.

6. COMMUNITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2005/06 (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO. 34)

The Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP's) Community Strategy is now within its second year of operation. Encouragingly, over 80% of the 100 actions to be carried out by this Council in the first year have been achieved. While many of these actions have been process based, setting the scene for service delivery, the second year's actions will start to bring tangible benefits for service delivery.

Many of the community action networks (CANs) are performing well, and work on home energy conservation through the environmental quality and protection CAN has attracted particular praise from GOSE. There is scope to improve the effectiveness of some CANs, particularly the one working on older persons issues. The LSP has discussed and approved the action plans proposed, subject to some minor amendments.

Members supported a suggestion that actions should be included to promote the integration of ethnic minorities in the district. It was reported that action to develop an Equalities Forum and Network is progressing.

The issue was raised that the mechanisms for measuring performance and the scrutiny functions undertaken by the review panels within this Council have not yet been developed within the LSP. While there is a degree of peer review operating within the partnership, this is an issue which the Cabinet considers needs further thought. The review of functions which are the responsibility of this Council can be picked up by the existing Council mechanisms.

A number of members applauded the very successful play schemes which are run throughout the school holidays by this Council in conjunction with partner organisations.

The Community Strategy Action Plan for 2005/06 has been agreed subject to final redrafting being agreed with the Leader of the Council and to the inclusion of actions to promote the integration of ethnic minorities in the District.

Cllr M J Kendal
CHAIRMAN

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