

## **REPORT OF CABINET**

**(Meetings held on 7 June and 3 July 2006)**

### **1. THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL CONTROL (REPORT A – 7 JUNE 2006) (MINUTE NO. 6)**

The Cabinet has agreed that expressions of interest be invited from interested local control centre operators to provide the monitoring service for NFDC sheltered housing tenants, community alarm users and an out of hours emergency service for NFDC. Subject to satisfactory results from an investigation of those interested providers that they are able to provide a quality monitoring service to the standards required by NFDC, a formal tender process will be undertaken to select a new external provider of these services with effect from 1 April 2007.

Previously, work was carried out to investigate a partnership approach to the future delivery of the Council's Central Control service. Following an informal approach to other organisations the creation of an effective partnership has not been possible. Members have therefore agreed that the only option available that will produce the necessary savings, whilst maintaining a quality service that can be afforded, is externalisation.

The Cabinet noted that the Employee side were disappointed with the proposal but understood the reasons for the recommendation. They have asked, If the service is externalised, then as well as ensuring that the high standard of service is maintained, every effort be made to use the situation to gain improvements in the service.

The Housing Portfolio Holder has advised the Cabinet that outsourcing of Central Control would only take place on the strict understanding that there would be no detrimental change to the service provided to residents. If, as a result of outsourcing, additional funding is freed up, that should be re-invested into the service to enable improvements.

### **2. THE SOUTH EAST PLAN (REPORT B – 7 JUNE 2006) (MINUTE NO. 7)**

The Cabinet has agreed a response to a consultation on the South East Plan. In general, the Plan as it relates to the New Forest District sets out an acceptable basis for the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework and the response is based on the detail set out in Report B to the Cabinet.

Members discussed in detail the issues arising from the consultation. In particular they considered the proposed housing requirement for the New Forest District, including the National Park. The requirement in the Plan is for 207 dwellings a year amounting to 4,138 dwellings for the period 2006/2026. The proposed breakdown of the District's overall housing requirement is 1,538 dwellings in Totton/Waterside with the remaining 2,600 in the rest of the district. Members agreed that these targets should be treated as an indicative distribution rather than as a separate regional policy requirement for each part of the District.

Providing affordable housing is a very big issue in the District. A lower future housebuilding rate will mean that, if current local policy remains unchanged, there will be a reduced amount of affordable housing that can be provided as part of a residential development through negotiated contributions from developers. The Cabinet has therefore agreed that a joint Member Task Group be set up comprising a small number of members from each of the Housing, Health & Social Inclusion and Economy & Planning Review Panels to consider, and to report back to Cabinet on the issue of how the Council can best meet its affordable housing targets in this context.

Members expressed concern over housing densities generally. In particular, they feel that insufficient weight is given to the differences between city and village areas and that the need for local variations in densities according to local circumstances should be emphasised, rather than regional targets. The Cabinet feels that whilst there are problems with local infrastructures such as public transport arrangements and increasing demands on water supplies that are not keeping pace with new developments, there is also the issue of quality of life for people in areas of over development or inappropriate development. Members agreed that officers should make particular reference to these concerns in the formal response to the South East Plan.

Based on the response to the South East Plan consultation, the Cabinet also agreed that the Economy and Planning Portfolio Holder be authorised to agree appropriate joint responses from the PUSH group of authorities and from the Central Hampshire/New Forest group of authorities.

### **3. CHANGES TO EXISTING DELEGATIONS AND NEW DELEGATIONS UNDER THE HOUSING ACT 2004 (REPORT F – 7 JUNE 2006) (MINUTE NO. 11)**

Following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, the Cabinet has agreed changes to the Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers in so far as they relate to the Cabinet and as detailed in Report F to the Cabinet. The appointment of Proper Officers is a matter for the Council to agree.

#### ***RECOMMENDED:***

***That the following be appointed Proper Officers for the following purposes of the Housing Act 2004:-***

***Section 4 – To be the Proper Officer to whom any official complaint about the condition of residential premises must be made.***

***Assistant Director  
(Housing Services)***

***Section 239 – To be the Proper Officer for determining if a survey or examination is necessary.***

***Housing Improvements Manager***

**4. JUBILEE FIELD, SWAY – DEVELOPERS’ CONTRIBUTIONS (REPORT H – 7 JUNE 2006) (MINUTE NO. 13)**

The Cabinet has agreed that a sum of £29,700 be made available from developers’ contributions for open space to undertake the provision of a new play area at Jubilee Field, Sway, subject to the means of implementation being to the satisfaction of the Director of Community Services and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

The planned project is for a multi-play unit together with swings, roundabout and other individual items of equipment. A fully specified safer surfacing, together with seating, bins, fencing and gates is also part of the scheme. There has been extensive consultation with local people and organisations over the proposals and the Parish Council are of the view that Jubilee Field is the most appropriate location. The total cost of the scheme is £34,700 with the balance of funding being met by the Parish Council.

**5. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER (REPORT I – 7 JUNE 2006) (MINUTE NO. 14)**

The Cabinet has considered and noted the Annual Audit and Inspection letter that summarises the work undertaken by the Audit Commission and the District Auditor for the preceding year.

For the financial year 2004/05 the report concludes that the Council continues to focus on achieving its corporate objectives by utilising its resources and collaborating with partner organisations. The Council is demonstrating continued improvement through the effective delivery of its CPA improvement plan with clear benefits to the local community. The Inspection report also says that the Council is performing well in using the Community Strategy and other partnership initiatives to help meet its corporate priorities. The Council has strengthened its capacity to deliver improvement through more robust performance management and councillor and officer development programmes.

With regard to service delivery, the Council continues to improve overall and this is reflected in the good progress made across its four key priorities. In the areas where performance is not improving in relation to those priorities the Council is taking remedial action that is starting to show results.

Members noted that the audit opinion on the financial statements for 2004/05 was qualified because the Auditors were not able to determine whether the capital accounts were presented accurately. This is a problem that is replicated nationally following the introduction of the Prudential Code that requires local authorities to make different calculations. In the light of this members do not consider this to be a significant issue however, efforts are continuing to resolve the matter.

The Council’s financial position continues to be soundly based and in line with the Council’s agreed financial strategy. The Council has in place a robust governance and performance management framework that exceeds the minimum requirements in most respects.

The Audit Commission comments that overall the Council, previously rated an 'excellent and improving' authority continues to improve. They said they had rarely delivered such a positive report on an authority and this was a credit to the Council's achievements.

**6. PROVISIONAL FINAL ACCOUNTS 2005/06 (REPORT A – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 18)**

The Cabinet has agreed, subject to the recommendations below, the provisional outturn position of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Commercial Services.

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, local authorities are required to adopt their final accounts within three months of the end of the financial year to which they refer. The Final Accounts Committee considered the matter at their meeting on 30 June 2006 and raised no points that they wished the Cabinet to consider.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That additional provision of £200,000 be made for redundancy costs and £50,000 for possible Income Tax and National Insurance liabilities;***
- (b) *That £139,000 be transferred to the Committed Schemes revenue reserve; and***
- (c) *That the balance of any other General Fund outturn variation be transferred to the Capital Programme Reserve.***

**7. ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT (REPORT B – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 19)**

The Cabinet has agreed the 'Backward Look' Efficiency Statement for 2005/06 for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Council is required to submit two annual efficiency statements a year, one looking at proposed actions for the forthcoming year, the other looking back at what has been achieved in the previous year.

The Council has for many years operated a four year rolling financial strategy, linked to its Corporate Strategy and fully integrated with the service planning process. This annual process requires the Council to identify efficiency savings, in order to enable the introduction of new initiatives and the management of council tax increases.

The Council's expenditure planning/budgeting process is ideally suited for identifying cash backed efficiencies that are incorporated into the detailed budgets and closely monitored during the financial year.

The Council is adopting a strategic approach to efficiency change. This involves building on the existing partnership arrangements that the Council has in place alongside the development of wider consideration of delivery options through the procurement agenda. The Council also aims to use e-technology to its maximum potential.

The efficiency target for the authority is £690,000 p.a. giving a total target of £2.07m by 2007/08. The efficiencies identified in the statement for 2005/06 total £645,680. This together with efficiencies identified and previously submitted for 2004/05 gives a total identified to date of £1,044,339. Members noted however, that the Council must not be complacent and these savings need to be sustained until the end of 2007/08.

## **8. FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2006/2010 (REPORT C – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 20)**

The Cabinet has considered and recommended approval of the Financial Strategy for 2006/10. The Strategy sets out the broad financial framework that the Council will operate over the forthcoming four financial years.

Members noted that although there were still a number of challenges facing the Council, the immediate position was clearer than it had been in previous years as the amount of Government Revenue Support grant for 2007/08 was already known. The Government was moving to a three year Revenue Support Grant settlement process in order to provide local authorities with greater stability for their medium term financial planning. However, members also noted that the Government had introduced a Comprehensive Spending Review as a precursor to each three-year settlement process and this would have an effect on local government finance in the future. The early indications were that it would be a tough review.

The Cabinet noted that no provision has been made in the current draft General Fund forecast for any new growth items such as wheeled refuse bins. The Chairman said that if wheeled refuse bins were ever introduced they would be very expensive. Comments received from residents were not in favour of such an introduction. Wheeled bins were seen as ugly and blocked footpaths for most of the day. The slower mechanical process of emptying them was more costly to run. However, this had to be balanced against the improved health and safety element and the fact that wherever wheeled bins were used in alternate weekly refuse collection, recycling rates rose.

The Environment Portfolio Holder said that the plastic refuse sacks were efficient but they were also expensive. There was no pressure from residents to introduce a wheeled refuse bin system, however the Council had to increase their recycling rates.

Over the coming months residents would be encouraged to make more and better use of their free clear recycling sacks.

In terms of the Council's efficiency agenda generally, members noted that through the Council's ongoing Energy Management Programme a detailed assessment would be made of proposals such as alternative fuels for health and leisure centres.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the Financial Strategy as set out in paragraph 13 of Report C to the Cabinet be approved.***

**9. REVIEW OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY (GRANTS/LOANS) (REPORT D – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 21)**

The Cabinet has agreed a number of changes to the current Housing Assistance Policy to enable more effective targeting of grant budget. The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System as a new method of judging the suitability of a dwelling, for occupation based on a risk assessment. The new system means that there is a duty to take action where there are hazards that are rated as category 1 eg: dangerous gas or electricity systems.

Members agreed that the budgeted funds need to be targeted at those most in need. There is no change in the Council's commitment to help people remain in their own homes where possible. However, the use of public money has to be balanced against the use of property equity release schemes where possible, to enable more funding to be focussed where it is most needed.

It is difficult to predict the demand for the funding however, a further report will be made back to Cabinet if there is a significant shortfall in required funding.

**10. HAMPSHIRE MINERALS & WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - STRATEGY (REPORT E – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 22)**

The Cabinet has agreed a response to a consultation by HCC on the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Strategy, the core element of the Development Framework.

The Strategy covers the period up to 2020. It deals with a spatial vision for dealing with waste and minimising the use of primary materials; the broad areas into which the county has been divided for the purposes of planning for minerals and waste; general minerals and waste planning issues and national, regional and local minerals and waste planning strategies and policies.

In considering the detail Members expressed concerns about proposals for disposal of London's waste in Hampshire and other counties in the South East. The submitted South East Plan, at Policy W3, proposed county apportionments for London's waste. HCC has already objected to that Policy. The Hampshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Strategy stated that, 'No provision will be made for London's waste'. This was for a number of reasons, not least that the majority of current landfill void was in the south-west of Hampshire, within NFDC, and remote from sustainable transport networks. The Strategy further states 'This is not to say that Hampshire will not accept any of London's waste, just that landfill sites will not be provided specifically for it. It is likely that Hampshire will, in the course of its business arrangements, accept waste from London for recycling and recovery and treatment'.

The Cabinet also expressed concern at the linkages in the document between minerals and waste, particularly in relation to the transport structure. The three incinerators in Hampshire are currently working to full capacity dealing with Hampshire's own waste. There is no spare resource to deal with London's waste.

Members noted that there are particular problems in dealing with building waste. However, HIOWLA is making a bid to carry out a study looking at the disposal of commercial waste generally.

The following comments are those agreed by the Cabinet as a response to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Strategy.

"The Council :

- (a) supports:
  - (i) the proposed two-stage approach to minerals apportionment which limits local apportionment to the period up to 2016 with a strategic reserve beyond that date (paragraph 20.10 of the Strategy); and
  - (ii) the proposal to make no provision for London's waste (Policy S3)
  
- (b) has some concerns about the soundness of the Strategy as follows:
  - (i) It does not contain sufficient criteria to direct the search for new sites for waste recycling/ composting/ recovery/ treatment or for mineral extraction (Policies S5 and S8). The factors listed in Appendix 2 of the document are not sufficiently related to objectives or principles such that they can provide a basis for site selection, for example, proximity to sources of waste and users of minerals, utilising existing sites/ allocations e.g. industrial sites, minimising transport distances, or where possible locating facilities/ extraction sites close to main transport routes. While recognising that minerals in particular have to be worked where they are, the Council is particularly concerned that if there are choices to be made, the Strategy should offer locational guidance in the form of criteria or principles such as these. A cross reference to a related policy in the South East Plan may be helpful, e.g. Policy W17, Location of Waste Management Facilities.
  - (ii) Insufficient attention is paid to the transport implications of minerals and waste developments generally, and consideration should be given to including in Section 11 of the document (Strategy Objectives) an objective to limit transport distances and to direct minerals and waste transport to strategic and main transport routes wherever possible.
  - (iii) It does not give a clear picture of the nature and distribution of the waste treatment facilities that already exist (for example the extensive array of public and private facilities in this District) or the extent and type of additional facilities required (Sections 17-19)

- (iv) Certain forms of specialist waste are not mentioned, in particular end-of-life vehicles, tyres, plastics and asbestos (Section 19 and Policy S7) – end of life vehicles and tyres in particular are identified in the submitted Policy W10 of the South East Plan as requiring sub-regional facilities.
- (v) Combining policies for minerals and waste leads to lack of clarity and a degree of confusion with regard to strategy objectives.”

**11. ICT SECURITY POLICY AND GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS (REPORT F – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 23)**

In accordance with the agreed action plan under the Code of Practice for Corporate Governance for 2004/05, the Information and Communications Technology Security Policy and Guidance for members has been updated. The Cabinet has supported a new policy document as detailed in Appendix A to Report F to the Cabinet.

The original ICT Security Policy, for both members and employees, was approved in 2000. Following a review, a revised security policy was issued in respect of employees in June 2004. Finalisation of the policy for members was delayed until issues relating to the ICT infrastructure for members were resolved.

The members and officers panel that has prepared the policy statement has made the following recommendations, which the Cabinet has supported, in the light of the new policy :-

- All existing members will be offered training on the revised policy;
- An abridged version of the Security Policy will be produced focussing on the salient security features only;
- The “two hour” per week personal use condition is subject to further review following proposed changes to taxation legislation;
- The security risks of subscribing, via the Council’s systems, to other Internet Service providers and Email account providers will be subject to detailed analysis to determine whether the security improvements within those service provisions will now facilitate a relaxation of the internal rules; and
- All technical advances in ICT technology will be kept under review with a view to the relaxation of the policy statement wherever practicable.

***RECOMMENDED:***

***That the Information and Communications Technology Security Policy and Guidance for members, as detailed in Appendix A to Report F to the Cabinet be approved.***



**12. INVESTIGATION OF POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED SITES (REPORT G – 3 JULY) (MINUTE NO. 24)**

The Cabinet has agreed an application to Defra for funding under the Contaminated Land Capital Projects Programme (CLCPP) in respect of the intrusive site investigations required for the Eling foreshore. Subject to Defra funding being available, they have agreed a supplementary estimate of £26,500 to fund the investigations required.

The Environment Act 1995 contains provisions introduced specifically to address the historical legacy of land contamination that arises from former industrial and military uses including scrap yards, landfill sites and petroleum storage etc. Members noted the detail of these provisions and the cost implications associated with site investigations. Currently funding is available from Defra to cover these costs.

There are a number of sites already identified as requiring intrusive site investigation through the investigation and risk assessment process under the Council's Contaminated Land Strategy. However, a specific complaint has been received relating to Eling foreshore. The land to the south of Eling Wharf Industrial site has a history of light and heavy industrial uses, including the former Tar Distillery and Creosoting Works. Eling and Bury Marshes are directly adjacent to the site, to the east, and are designated as an SSSI. An initial joint investigation undertaken with the Environment Agency has shown elevated levels of heavy metals and oily compounds. A full investigation will now be carried out with a view to determining the likely origin and extent of the contamination and to assist in the possible determination of the site as contaminated land.

Although further applications will be submitted to Defra on a priority basis, as and when required, without further member approval, this is subject to the current CLCPP remaining at 100% funding of eligible works and any site investigation being undertaken by one of the preferred contractors obtained through the recent tendering process.

All future potentially contaminated sites will be reported to the Cabinet for information.

**13. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2005/06 (REPORT H – 3 JULY 2006) (MINUTE NO. 25)**

The Cabinet has agreed the annual treasury report that covers the treasury activity for 2005/06. They have also considered the actual Prudential Indicators for 2005/06 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

The Council has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector for the operation of its Treasury Management Service. The requirements of this Code give the prime objective of the treasury management activity as the effective management of risk, and that borrowing activities are undertaken in a prudent and affordable way on a sustainable basis.

The Code requires as a minimum the regular reporting of treasury management activities to forecast the likely activity for the forthcoming year and review actual activity for the proceeding year.

In considering the detail of the annual report members particularly noted that all cash investments were now dealt with in house. They agreed that whilst this was currently prudent, should the markets change the policy would be reviewed to maximise the benefits to the Council.

**Cllr M J Kendal  
CHAIRMAN**

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