

25 JUNE 2007

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 25 June 2007.

p Cllr W H Dow - Chairman
e Cllr P R Woods - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

p G C Beck
p D A Britton
p Mrs D M Brooks
p Mrs F Carpenter
p Mrs J L Cleary
p D E Cracknell
p G F Dart
p S P Davies
e L T Dunsdon
p Ms L C Ford
p H F Forse
p P C Greenfield
p C J Harrison
p D Harrison
p E J Heron
p P E Hickman
p Mrs J A Hoare
p Mrs M D Holding
p J A G Hutchins
p Mrs P Jackman
p M J Kendal
p C Lagdon
p Mrs M E Lewis
e Mrs K J Lord
p Mrs P J Lovelace
p B D Lucas
p Mrs A E McEvoy
p Mrs M McLean
p G J Parkes

Councillors:

p Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
p J Penwarden
p L R Puttock
p M P Reid
p A W Rice
p B Rickman
p W S Rippon-Swaine
p Mrs M J Robinson
p Mrs A M Rostand
p D J Russell
p R F Scrivens
e Lt Col M J Shand
p A E J Shotter
p Mrs B Smith
p Mrs S I Snowden
p A J Swain
p M H Thierry
e A R Tinsley
p D B Tipp
p C R Treleaven
p F P Vickers
p M S Wade
p S S Wade
e R A Wappet
p J G Ward
p A Weeks
p Dr M N Whitehead
p C A Wise
p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, J Mascal, C Malyon, Mrs D Dabrowska, Mrs M Dunsmore and Miss G O'Rourke.

12. MINUTES (PAPER A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2007, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Beck, Davies, Hutchins, Rice, Mrs Snowden and Ward in item 17.

14. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER – BY-ELECTION FOR ASHURST, COPYTHORNE NORTH AND MINSTEAD WARD – 14 JUNE 2007 (REPORT B).

Members welcomed Cllr Forse to his first meeting of the Council following his election on 14 June.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Returning Officer on the By-Election for the District Council's Ashurst, Copythorne North and Minstead Ward be noted.

15. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Queen's Birthday Honours

The Chairman was pleased to announce that the following five residents of the District had been recognised in the Queen's birthday honours: -

1. The Chief Executive of Sunseeker Yachts, Robert Braithwaite MBE who lived at Bashley, CBE for his charitable and business achievements.
2. Hampshire policewoman, Chief Inspector Karen Scipio who lived in the District – MBE for her service to the community.
3. Retired GP, Doctor John Dracass who worked in Totton for 32 years - MBE for his services to medicine.
4. Head Forestry Commission keeper, John Gulliver, from Ashurst - MBE for his services to forestry.
5. Pam Ledingham, from Hythe - MBE for services to the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.

Veterans' Week

The Chairman announced the success of the Council's veterans' week events.

The Council had received a number of letters and emails from many of the veterans of the New Forest thanking the Council and ExxonMobil, for organising events in their honour.

The week-long exhibition of military memorabilia, based at the New Forest Museum, Lyndhurst, had attracted over 300 visitors. Exhibits had come from far and wide, including Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Fordingbridge Museum, the 17th Port and Maritime Regiment and from the private collection of Mike Reed from New Milton.

On Sunday, June 17 a service of thanksgiving and praise, had been held at St Michaels and All Angels at Lyndhurst. The service had celebrated the lives of members of the armed forces and the service they had given to the country throughout all wars and conflicts, including the first and second world wars, the Falklands conflict, Korea, the Gulf War, and Iraq and Iran.

On June 21 at the Water's Edge, Dibden Golf Centre, students from Hounslow School currently involved in a history project covering World War II and D-Day had put questions to a panel of six veterans. The question-time event was followed by a special lunch for 60 veterans hosted by Cllr Sqn Ldr Michael Pemberton and his wife Cllr Christine Ford; several veterans gave a vote of thanks on behalf of their organisations, the Comrades of the New Forest, the Royal Air Force Association, and the Normandy Veterans.

The week had been rounded off with a veterans' garden party at Appletree Court, with a steel band, refreshments, advice and information points and entertainment.

New Forest Show

The Chairman announced that at this year's New Forest Show the Council would be highlighting the issue of access to Council services.

The show attracted visitors from far and wide, and gave the Council the opportunity of letting people know about the range of services being delivered and, importantly how to access them easily. The Chairman requested that members encourage their constituents to visit the Councils exhibit (number 148) at the show.

Members of the public would be provided with information regarding recycling rubbish, energy saving tips, how to get more involved in the work of the Council, and access to services for people with special needs.

Hampshire Games

The Chairman was pleased to announce that over 100 young people from the New Forest had taken part in the Hampshire Games - a three-day multi-sports competition for 7 to 16 year olds. The games were organised by Sport Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Many of the sports clubs, run from the Council's health and leisure centres, received accolades and many medals were won by New Forest youngsters for outstanding achievement in the following sports: squash, hockey, rugby, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, athletics and netball.

16. REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEE.

The Chairman proposed that as item 3 of the Cabinet Report referred to Performance Matters and Report C later in the agenda was the Council's Performance Plan, the two items be discussed together. Members agreed to this suggestion.

The Leader of the Council, as Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the Cabinet dated 6 June 2007.

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

The Leader informed members that the annual publication deadline of the 30 June would change in the near future. This would mean that rather than having a special meeting of the Council to approve the Plan, this could be done at the normal July Council meeting.

The indicators had shown that the Council had met a large majority of the targets. However there had been one area of concern namely the target relating to housing affordability and provision. This was largely due to the low number of housing completions during last year. It was hoped that the Council would achieve 100 new completions during the coming year. The Portfolio Holder along with the Housing Review Panel had been actively examining ways to improve the Council's performance on affordable housing. Nonetheless obstacles such as funding and availability of land remained a barrier to achieving this. The Council would seek to find innovative ways to overcome these, including homebuyers' schemes where money collected from second home council tax would be used to fund keyworker accommodation. The extension of the rural exceptions policy was another area that would be investigated, in the hope that additional land for housing could be sought from local landowners. The Council would work hard in the coming year to meet the challenge for providing as many new houses as possible.

Members spoke in support of the Leader advocating the District's housing issue as a priority for the Council. In addressing the issue of land supply shortage, it was felt by some members that examining potential sites within rural communities was a good way forward. It was also suggested that the Council seek to work with other public bodies on this issue, particularly those who might be able to release land for housing development such as schools.

Some members expressed concern with regard to the indicators showing the number of homeless claims made within the District. Whilst it was recognised that officers worked hard to make most appropriate decisions regarding claims, it was felt that the statistics might not provide an accurate picture of the extent of housing need. It was also recognised that the Forest had large numbers of individuals 'sofa surfing' and some members felt that more should be done to help these individuals improve their quality of life.

Some members considered that the housing situation with the Forest had reached crisis point. The housing shortage was being exacerbated by the large number of second homes within New Forest villages. Members welcomed concentrated effort on this area of policy.

Members recognised that other authorities across the south were also experiencing similar pressures on housing provision.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet's report be received and the recommendations adopted and;
- (b) That the Performance Plan – 'Performance Matters 2007/08', be approved.

17. REPORT OF GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE.

Cllrs Beck, Davies, Hutchins, Rice, Mrs Snowden and Ward declared personal and prejudicial interests as members of New Milton Town Council. They left the meeting during consideration of the item.

Cllr Puttock, Chairman of the Committee, presented the report of the meeting held on 15 June 2007. Cllr Puttock requested that an amendment be made to the recommendation, changing the date of 25 July 2007 to 1 August 2007.

On the motion that the report be received and the recommendations adopted, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations, including the above amendment, be adopted.

18. PERFORMANCE MATTERS: PERFORMANCE PLAN 2007/2008 (REPORT C).

Members commented on the targets relating to health and recognised that the local PCT reorganisation had hindered the achievement of some of the Council's targets. Members felt that the Council should continue to work with the PCT in promoting healthier lifestyles for residents and improving health services.

RESOLVED:

That the Performance Matters: Performance Plan 2007/08 be approved.

19. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Forse be appointed to the Environment Review Panel in place of Cllr Dart.