

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 3 October 2007)

1. **COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008 – 2012 ‘FUTURE MATTERS’ (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 36)**

The Cabinet has agreed, for the purposes of public consultation, a draft Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for 2008-2012 – ‘Future Matters’.

The document is the culmination of a significant amount of work undertaken through the Local Strategic Partnership and by the community. Six years ago, a wide variety of organisations from across the public, private and voluntary sectors in the New Forest district came together to develop better ways of working to improve the district’s quality of life. That was the start of the Changing Lives Partnership. During the past year the Partnership has been reviewing the Community Strategy, compiling evidence and working with the two local planning authorities and the Hampshire Strategic Partnership to achieve alignment of direction and avoid duplication of effort.

The draft SCS sets out suggestions for a new vision; a series of desired outcomes; ways in which the strategy would work with other plans and strategies; a series of topic based chapters setting out the local context, priorities and outcomes and six potential flagship projects. The Strategy is not however, about organisations but about communities. Everyone in the district has a role to play. As local communities develop their own action plans through initiatives such as town and parish plans, the Partnership will help deliver those multi agency actions that best meet the priorities in the Strategy.

The Cabinet, in discussion, agreed that the following option should be taken forward as the vision for the district:-

‘A thriving New Forest where people, the environment and the economy provide exceptional quality of life’

They also agreed that the section in the document relating to Older People should be amended to reflect more accurately the useful contribution that post retirement people brought to society.

The document will now be considered by the Local Strategic Partnership and then be made available for public consultation from November 2007 – February 2008. The comments received will then come back for consideration and the final document agreed.

2. **NEW FOREST LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 37)**

The Cabinet has agreed that, having regard to the recommendations of Planning & Transportation Review Panel and the Planning Development Control Committee made at their meeting on 19th September 2007, the Core Strategy Preferred Options document as set out at Annex 1 to Report B to the Cabinet, be approved for consultation.

The Preferred Options stage of the Core Strategy is part of the Council's Local Development Framework. The draft document recommends a spatial strategy for the areas of the District outside the National Park for the next 20 years. In brief, it:-

- identifies the main social, economic and environment characteristics of the area, and the main issues that the Core Strategy needs to address;
- arrives at preferred options for the distribution of housing and employment development, and the future of the town centres over the plan period; and
- considers a full range of other policy issues, including energy use and climate change, affordable housing, economic development, tourism, environmental matters, leisure and recreation, community facilities and developer contributions.

The Preferred Options are a first expression of what the Council proposes for the district. In particular the proposals in the document attempt to address some specific issues in the district surrounding the need to maintain the character of areas, both rural and urban, in the light of the pressure of government housing targets; the availability of local affordable housing and the proposal to consider small scale affordable housing development on green field sites to address the needs of local people.

A number of members expressed concern that the New Forest National Park had withdrawn from working with the Council on a joint Preferred Options document. They felt that a joint document, that would have covered the entire New Forest district, would have been much more helpful. As a result they expressed the view that there were now a number of councillors, whose wards were either wholly or partly within the New Forest National Park, who would not now be able to directly represent the views of their constituents in the formation of the New Forest National Park Preferred Options document. Members felt that a working group of affected members should be formed to ensure that the views of their constituents were adequately represented. They agreed that they would bring this important point to the attention of the Council through a Notice of Motion.

The draft Core Strategy Preferred Options document will be published for a statutory six week consultation public consultation period starting 26 October.

3. HOUSING GREEN PAPER : HOMES FOR THE FUTURE, MORE AFFORDABLE, MORE SUSTAINABLE (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 38)

The Cabinet has agreed a response to the Housing Green Paper: 'Homes for the Future, More Affordable, More Sustainable' as set out in Report C to the Cabinet and as amended to include the specific issues detailed below.

The document sets out an ambitious target of delivering 2 million new homes by 2016 and 3 million new homes by 2020. The Partnership of Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) sub region which covers the Waterside area of the district has agreed to deliver 80,000 new homes by 2026. However, members expressed concern at a recent comment from the Communities and Local Government Minister who suggested that the national target be increased by 20%. In view of the fact that the South East Plan has yet to be adopted and as such the annual house building target is not finalised, The Cabinet consider the statement from the Minister to be premature and unhelpful and this is reflected in the Council's response.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) has provided rural planning authorities with powers to deliver and address the need and demand for housing in rural areas. Members agreed that the Community Land Trust model was an innovative way of delivering rural housing and in the Council's response to the Green Paper support for such schemes has been strengthened. In view of the lack of available land in the district for housing most new build is developed on 'in-fill' sites. This results in pressures on infrastructures such as utilities. Whilst the Cabinet noted that a Community Infrastructure Fund is being established to link the provision of transport to the delivery of housing they agreed that further funding is needed to support other infrastructure pressures specifically in areas where development might be seen as piecemeal but overall has a significant impact.

The Cabinet supports the greater emphasis on family housing but has included in the response to the Green Paper their concerns at the target adopted by the Housing Corporation of a quarter of all social rented homes being three or more bedrooms. Members feel that this percentage should be much higher to provide more larger affordable homes that would then enable young families to remain within their community. The current trend of building smaller one/two bedroom accommodation in the district's towns and villages is exacerbating the problem of families being forced to move elsewhere to find acceptable housing.

The Green Paper sets milestones for achieving zero carbon in new build homes from 2016. Building Regulations will change to achieve these targets. The Council's Core Strategy proposes a framework that will require all private developers to build more sustainably. The Cabinet agreed to strengthen this point in the Council's response, to reflect the need for market housing to meet increasingly higher levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

In considering the lack of land in the district for housing development, the Cabinet discussed other ways of providing accommodation. The Council already operate a successful empty homes policy to try and bring back into use the maximum amount of accommodation. Whilst there are sufficient ways for the Council to do this, Members agreed that new funding, to replace the discontinued Temporary Social Housing Grant, would help to take this work forward.

In considering their response to the Government Green Paper the Cabinet took into account the views of the Tenants' Consultative Group who, whilst accepting that there were a number of new ideas in the Green Paper, did not feel that there were any actual solutions to the housing problems in the New Forest.

The Tenants' Consultative Group expressed three main concerns:-

- The site size thresholds and developers slipping through the net;
- The need for community infrastructure and funding investment especially in rural and remote areas; and
- The scale of need for affordable housing and putting into place policies that would help to facilitate more affordable housing.

However, they were pleased to note that the Council may not have to sell HRA assets to develop new homes.

The Council's response to the Green Paper will be submitted to the Communities and Local Government Minister no later than 15 October 2007.

**4. CAR PARKING STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPMENT (REPORT D)
(MINUTE NO. 39)**

The Cabinet has agreed a Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Provision of Car Parking Space for Residential Development' as detailed in Annex B to Report D to the Cabinet. The SPD will now be consulted on in accordance with the Council's adopted Scheme of Community Involvement, with a view to considering the public response towards the end of the year and the Council formally adopting the SPD with any appropriate amendments.

A review of car parking standards for development in the New Forest was undertaken with the aim of generating a policy and standards that will be more responsive to local circumstances and take advantage of the increased flexibility introduced through Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3). The district council is now able to set its own standards for residential development. Standards for non residential development remain a County Council function.

In particular the Cabinet have discussed the environmental implications of off-street car parking provision. They strongly support the need for the use of sustainable drainage systems in new developments and the use of permeable surfaces for parking that will reduce flood and surface water run-off risks. Whilst a forthcoming supplementary planning document will address these issues, the Cabinet has also asked officers to consider ways to better inform and advise the public of the environmental issues that arise when changing garden land into parking provision.

5. ABANDONED SHOPPING TROLLEYS (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 40)

In the light of a Notice of Motion considered by the Council in October 2006, the Cabinet has considered the policy options for dealing with abandoned shopping trolleys in the district.

Although the numbers of abandoned shopping trolleys in the New Forest is small, the nuisance that they cause can be significant. In general, supermarkets in the area take a responsible attitude towards abandoned trolleys. However, there is still the opportunity for irresponsible people to remove and abandon shopping trolleys.

Stronger legal powers are now available to deal with this problem, that would enable the Council to seize, store and dispose of abandoned shopping and luggage trolleys and to recover costs from the owners. The Cabinet has agreed that a wide ranging consultation with further research into the financial and practical operational issues of any such proposal is the most appropriate way forward.

To this end they have agreed that a formal period of consultation be initiated, as required by Section 99 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, regarding the possibility of applying Schedule 4 to control abandoned shopping trolleys in the New Forest District.

At a future date they will consider the outcome of the consultation and, as appropriate, agree a way forward.

6. PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE – PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO. 41)

PUSH came together initially in 2003/04 with a common purpose of regenerating the sub-regional economy, addressing regional and sub-regional economic disparities, tackling pockets of social deprivation and social exclusion, and securing the long term prosperity and quality of life of residents in the area through a strong and prosperous economy. With the advent of the South East Plan, PUSH's role embraced the sub-regional input to the Regional Spatial Strategy. PUSH has been widely acclaimed for its active engagement with the South East Plan process.

PUSH currently meets in private and has no formal democratic process. As it has developed it has become apparent that continuing as an informal partnership is no longer an option. The PUSH Leaders and Chief Executives' Panel have therefore unanimously agreed a series of proposed governance arrangements that the Council is now asked to support.

To this end the Cabinet has agreed, subject to the recommendation below, to:-

- (i) the establishment of joint arrangements between this Council, Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, East Hampshire District Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Havant Borough Council and Winchester City Council (together referred to as "the PUSH authorities"), based on the broad structure and functions described in section 5 and Appendices 1 and 2 of Report F to them;
- (ii) the establishment of a Joint Committee of the PUSH authorities with delegated authority to discharge such Executive functions as are necessary to implement the PUSH business plan, subject to the business plan being approved on an annual basis by this Council, be approved;
- (iii) to an Executive Member being appointed as the Council's representative on the Joint Committee, with a second Executive member being appointed as deputy in the event that first member is unable to attend; and
- (iv) the Chief Executive being authorised to finalise the detail of the joint arrangements, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Leader of the Council and the Council's representative on the Joint Committee, on the basis set out in section 5 and Appendices 1 and 2 of Report F to the Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***That the establishment of joint arrangements as set out in Report F to the Cabinet, including the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee with authority to carry out overview and scrutiny functions in relation to matters delegated to the Joint Committee, be approved;***
- (b) ***That a non-executive member be appointed as this Council's representative on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that a second non-executive member be appointed to serve as deputy member in the absence of the appointed representative;***

- (c) ***That the Chief Executive be authorised to finalise the detail of the joint arrangements in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, on the basis set out in section 5 and Appendices 1 and 2 of Report F to the Cabinet; and***
- (d) ***That the Council's Constitution be amended so far as is necessary to give effect to these decisions.***

7. LEISURE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW : HEALTH AND LEISURE CENTRES MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO. 42)

The Cabinet has agreed that, based on the case made in the Leisure Fundamental Service Review and detailed in Report G to them, the delivery of the Council's Health and Leisure Centre service be retained in house, with a plan for continuous improvement of the service to maintain quality whilst pursuing potential areas for savings.

As part of the Council's performance management process the Health and Leisure Centres undertook a Fundamental Review of the service they provide to the public.

Overall the review shows that the service:-

- Is highly valued by the communities it serves;
- Is highly rated by external assessors; and
- Compares favourably in most aspects with other public and private sector providers.

However, members agreed that a review should be undertaken of the way in which the service was procured given the high cost of the service and to ensure optimum efficiency and effectiveness. A long list of procurement options was considered initially which following detailed evaluation was reduced to three:-

- Internal delivery with an improvement plan;
- External partnership; and
- External partnership with trust arm.

The evaluation of the options is based on the development of two models the basis of which is a detailed and rigorous benchmarking process involving The Sport England National Benchmarking Service; a private sector benchmarking partnership and an indicative market test. The development of the models was done on the basis that as far as possible they would both deliver the existing standards and level of service.

The evaluation of the models showed that:-

- The internal option would achieve a saving of £322,730;
- The external option would achieve a saving of £316,690; and
- The external option with a trust arm would achieve a saving of £554,050.

The savings associated with the internal model are already accruing and could be achieved by 2009/10. The savings associated with the external models are estimates only. Any savings from an external partnership would not start until 2009. The management arrangements under an external partnership would need to be clearly defined to protect service standards and programmes.

The process at all stages has involved consultation with key stakeholders many of whom have expressed a view as to their preferred outcome. Members noted that it had been a particularly stressful time for staff and they thanked all employees who had been involved in the process. The Cabinet were pleased that the Employee side had complimented the way in which the consultation process had been carried out.

8. HYTHE FERRY PARKING CLOCK SCHEME (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 43)

The Cabinet has agreed some revisions to the Hythe Ferry Clock system to enable a fairer provision of concessionary parking in conjunction with the use of the Hythe Ferry. Agreement will now be sought from Hampshire County Council, the Highway Authority, to amend the Concessionary Clock parking scheme for Hythe Ferry as set out in Report H to the Cabinet. Officers will then take the necessary steps to amend the Off Street Parking Places Order to implement the proposed scheme.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2007 TO AUGUST 2007 (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO. 44)

The Cabinet considered the forecast budget variations of all portfolios and committees from the approved original estimates for 2007/08. They have agreed, subject to the recommendations below, a revised General Fund budget; revised capital expenditure; the financial position of Commercial Services and actual expenditure to profiled budget positions of the General Fund, Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendices 1 to 5 of Report I to them.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary estimate of £200,000 in respect of reduced land charges income as detailed in Appendix 4 to Report I to the Cabinet be agreed.

10. COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES – COUNCIL NOTICE OF MOTION (REPORT J) (MINUTE NO. 45)

Following a Notice of Motion before the Council in July 2007, the Cabinet has considered the proposal to make representations to the Government to raise the upper limit of Council Tax on second homes to a level of twice the basic rate.

The Cabinet discussed the background to the Notice of Motion and agreed that it was important to find ways of bringing empty properties back into the housing stream. However, they felt that a better understanding of the issues was needed before coming to a view. They agreed that a formal response to the Notice of Motion be deferred to enable greater clarification of the issues to be tackled before representations, if any, can be considered.

**11. SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE (REPORTS K AND M - CONFIDENTIAL)
(MINUTE NOS. 47 AND 49)**

The Cabinet has considered the detail of a review of the senior management structure of the Council and has agreed, subject to the recommendations below, the restructuring of the senior management of the Authority as set out in Reports K and M (confidential) to them. As a result, the Director of Community Services has agreed to accept redundancy. The Cabinet placed on record their thanks to Mr N Gibbs, Director of Community Services for his 24 years of service and the enormous contribution he has made to New Forest District Council and local government in general.

In addition, but unrelated to the review, the Cabinet noted that Mr C Malyon, Director of Resources, would shortly be leaving the Council to take up employment elsewhere.

The delegations of the current Directors that fall within the remit of the Cabinet will be transferred to the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the redundancy of the Director of Community Services on the terms set out in Reports K and M (confidential) to the Cabinet be agreed; and***
- (b) That the delegations of the current Directors that are not the responsibility of the Cabinet be transferred to the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.***

**12. LYNDHURST CAR PARK – RENEWAL OF LEASE (REPORT L - CONFIDENTIAL)
(MINUTE NO. 48)**

The Cabinet has considered arrangements for the renewal of the lease of Lyndhurst car park which is owned by the Forestry Commission and agreed that, subject to the recommendation below, the Director of Resources be granted permission to agree a new lease for Lyndhurst Car Park on the terms outlined in Report L to them. If the terms offered by the Forestry Commission vary from those set out the matter will be referred to the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder for decision.

RECOMMENDED:

That additional expenditure as detailed in Report L (confidential) to the Cabinet be approved with effect from 2008/09.

**Cllr M J Kendal
CHAIRMAN**