

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meetings held on 7 May, 4 June and 7 July 2008)

1. OPERATING OUR VEHICLES – FINAL DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (REPORT A – 7 MAY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 113)

The Cabinet has agreed an Improvement Plan for the Green Audit : Theme 1, developed following the green fleet review of the Council's transport fleet, employee and member travel.

This is the first of 9 'themes' being reviewed as part of a Council wide green audit. The purpose of the review is to identify and implement actions aimed at reducing the consumption of non renewable fuel and the pollution arising from Council vehicles.

A Green Audit Project Board has been established with a multi party membership and chaired by the Leader of the Council. All employees and Members have had an opportunity of contributing to the review following an Environmental Challenge event which reviewed the draft Improvement Plan. The review has been assisted by the commissioning, at no cost, of an independent assessment of current practice by the Energy Savings Trust.

Members were pleased to note that the Employee side fully supported the need to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and the principle of working to minimise the impact the Council's municipal fleet and other business mileage had on the environment.

For the municipal fleet of vehicles, the review has set a target to reduce the current carbon footprint (1,365t of CO₂) by 10% in year 1. This is to be achieved principally through improved deployment of vehicles thereby reducing business miles travelled and improved fuel efficiency of vehicles through improved driver training and vehicle management information systems.

The key outcome for employee business travel is a target to reduce the carbon footprint (266t CO₂) by 15% over the next 3 years. This links in with the Council's Green Transport Plan 'Go Green' and will target a 10% reduction in business miles and a 5% reduction in home to work driver only journeys. Again these reductions are aimed to be achieved through a range of initiatives including incentives for the use of low emission vehicles, improved journey and route planning and raising the profile and content of the Green Transport Plan.

The business case had been prepared on a self financing basis but each area will be considered individually and supported if appropriate. A small incentive scheme has been built into the process to reward employees in the 'yellow fleet' project when they achieved 'green goals' and the Environment Panel has been asked to look at options for extending this to all employees.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2007/08 AND KEY TARGETS 2008/09 (REPORT B – 7 MAY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 114)

The Cabinet has noted the assessment of performance against the 2007/08 targets as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report B to them and agreed SMART targets for 2008/09 as detailed in Appendix 2 to Report B to them.

Each year the council identifies its key targets for the year ahead and assesses performance against them. The key targets have, in the main, been identified through the high priority areas within service improvement plans and are in line with the aims in 'Leading our Forest Communities', the new corporate plan. They provide a reasonable balance across all the key issues for the coming year. The targets will be monitored during the year and reported against the corporate plan in the council's annual performance report.

3. PROPOSED DELEGATION OF POWER TO MILFORD ON SEA PARISH COUNCIL TO DESIGNATE A NATURE RESERVE (REPORT C – 7 MAY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 115)

The Cabinet has agreed, subject to appropriate indemnities, that Milford-On-Sea Parish Council be delegated power under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to designate the areas shown shaded on the plan at Appendix 1 to Report C to the Cabinet as local nature reserves pursuant to Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended).

The Parish Council reported that the proposed local nature reserve, comprising the Pleasure Grounds, Shorefield Copse (Shavells Copse) and Studland Common, was currently managed under the Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme with the aim of enhancing biodiversity for both habitat and species. Where appropriate, the Parish Council is using the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plans to help bring its objectives to fruition.

The Parish Council is in the sixth year of a ten-year Forestry Commission programme of management for the woodlands, and in the first year of a five-year programme to help manage Studland Common for scrub and its lowland grassland habitat. Neglected footpaths are being managed to enhance public access and the whole of the Pleasure Grounds, Shorefield Copse and Studland Common are open to the public. The Parish Council enjoys the continuing benefits of a number of voluntary groups who help to look after the grounds.

4. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL FOR THE OVER 60'S AND THE DISABLED – UPDATE ON THE NEW NATIONAL SCHEME (REPORT A – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 6)

The Cabinet has agreed that, with effect from 23 June 2008, the concessionary fares travel scheme will be amended to give all day free travel for journeys that start in the District, to the over 60's and disabled residents.

Since 1 April 2008, people aged 60 and over and the disabled have been statutorily entitled to free off-peak travel on registered bus services anywhere in England. In the last year the number of eligible residents in the NFDC area with free bus passes increased by 18.9% primarily because of the change from free local travel to free national travel. With the introduction of the new scheme the Council moved its entire scheme from all day free travel to off-peak (0930 – 2300 weekdays and all day Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays) free travel. Most eligible residents are able to opt to travel after 9:30 on weekdays however, there have been some concerns from disabled workers who need to travel to work earlier; from the Royal National Institute for the Blind in relation to disability discrimination; from residents in areas of the district where the only morning bus leaves before 9:30; and from disabled people who have early hospital appointments.

The Council reluctantly restricted the original scheme because of a lack of Government funding that had resulted in an anticipated budget deficit of £300,000. Following careful monitoring and newly identified savings, the Cabinet are pleased that resources are now available to extend the concessionary travel scheme to all day use for qualifying residents. No changes will be required to existing concessionary fare cards which will continue to be acceptable.

However, the exact cost of the scheme to the Council is still unknown and the Cabinet are still concerned that the Government's statutory minimum scheme has a start time of 9:30 a.m. which will continue to cause specific problems in rural communities in other areas.

The Cabinet will undertake further reviews of the concessionary travel scheme (including the wholly discretionary scheme) at a later date, once the overall financial position is clearer.

5. EXTENSIONS TO THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL PUBLIC CCTV SYSTEM (REPORT B – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 7)

The Cabinet has agreed to the principle of a project to expand the public CCTV system into the areas of Hythe and New Milton. Since 2002, the Council has had public CCTV systems in Lymington; Totton; Ringwood and Lyndhurst.

The original study in 2001 recommended that these were the most appropriate areas based on a crime analysis of the New Forest area. The study also recommended three other locations, namely Hythe, New Milton and Fordingbridge. Installation at these locations could not be done at that time due to financial constraints.

Since then further work in terms of cost and location has been undertaken in relation to an expansion of the existing CCTV system. From August 2006 to August 2007 an analysis of crime/disorder issues in the New Forest area was carried out by the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership analyst. The findings reinforced the original survey conducted in 2001 to show that Hythe and New Milton are the primary choices for camera locations in terms of effectiveness and economy for the number of camera installations required in any one area.

The capital budget needed for the expansion project to proceed has yet to be established. However, the Cabinet agreed that additional resources available to the Council through the Local Authority Business Grant Initiative should be used to fund this additional security in business areas. The cost to install CCTV at any location varies depending on a number of factors, including transmission hubs, availability of existing transmission links, availability of spare recording capacity, configuring Appletree Court Control Room, costs for BT & CCTV contractors, consultancy advice, number of cameras, type of cameras and locations. Revenue costs depend on transmission distances from the control room and maintenance contracts for the amount of new equipment installed.

The Council is currently negotiating an EU tender to renew the current maintenance contract for the existing CCTV system. This tender also has an additional compulsory option for the contractor to include a menu of costs for additional camera installations during the five years of the new maintenance contract. This will ensure that the most competitive cost is obtained for any new installations.

Currently Town and Parish Councils benefitting from CCTV coverage make annual contributions towards the revenue costs based on the number of cameras, transmission costs, operator cover and other on costs. Town and Parish Councils who benefit from the extended scheme will also be asked to make contractual payments similar to those being paid at present.

Although CCTV in itself does not resolve issues of crime it is a useful tool in addition to the Police. The quality of the New Forest equipment is much superior to that criticised in other areas.

Other areas of the district will be considered for inclusion in the scheme as part of a rolling programme in due course.

6. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT TEAM – STAFFING LEVELS (REPORT C – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 8)

The Cabinet has agreed an increase in staffing level in the Housing Improvements Team to change the current 0.5 FTE post of Operations Manager to full time.

Legislative changes have resulted in an increase in workload and a growth in demand for the service. Additional funding of £445,000 was available as a result of a successful joint bid through the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) to the Regional Housing Board. Increased staffing levels would assist in effectively utilising that additional funding.

7. LEADER : OUTCOME OF BID (REPORT D – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 9)

In November 2007 the Cabinet agreed to a bid being made through the Local Action Group (LAG) to the South East Development Agency (SEEDA) for the next round of LEADER funding and for the Council to act as “accountable body” in the new scheme.

The LAG has been successful in its bid. However, in assessing the bids against their funding, SEEDA indicated that they had a shortfall against their available funds and are now requiring an additional £40,000 p.a. from the LAG.

The Cabinet are very disappointed that SEEDA has changed the basis of the arrangement at the last moment. The New Forest LAG, in association with other LAG's, are making strong representations to SEEDA to challenge their decision.

The LEADER programme has been extremely beneficial and every effort will be made to support its continuation. If the representations to SEEDA are unsuccessful, the Council and the New Forest National Park Authority will work together to establish what can be done to allow the project to go forward.

8. PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE (PUSH) – BUSINESS PLAN 2008-11 (REPORT E – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 10)

The Cabinet has agreed the PUSH Business Plan for 2008 – 2011 as set out in Appendix 1 to report E to them.

This first Business Plan draws together the detailed programme of action necessary to deliver the South Hampshire Strategy.

It is intended as a basis for developing a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) to cover the key elements of the Business Plan together with the relevant parts of the Transport for South Hampshire's Business Plan. The MAA will enable debate with Government to agree ways to increase economic growth in south Hampshire.

Membership of PUSH has enabled the Council to be part of the monitoring process for proposals for growth in the area and provides a channel for attracting resources. The partnership is now beginning to deliver tangible benefits to the Waterside and other areas of the district. The Cabinet is pleased with the work that is being undertaken and the opportunity that PUSH gives the Council to contribute to the decision making process for the future growth of the area.

9. RURAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANTS – REPORT OF THE POLICY AND STRATEGY PORTFOLIO HOLDER (REPORT F – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 11)

The Cabinet has agreed arrangements to set up a new Rural Communities Assistance Fund and a new scheme of Community Engagement Grants for all members.

The new Community Engagement Grants scheme will provide an opportunity for all members to engage directly with their own communities and address local need. It will replace the existing Rural Grant Scheme and will provide an amount of £500 to all members of the Council to allocate within their wards.

The Rural Communities Assistance Fund will provide additional help primarily to rural areas where there is specific need. This scheme will be administered by the Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters Portfolio Holder.

The Cabinet agreed that it is important that the schemes remain as flexible as possible, without rigid terms of reference to enable the funds to be used to maximum benefit.

The new arrangements are supported by the Corporate Overview Panel who will, if necessary, scrutinise the systems in due course.

10. APPLEMORE HEALTH & LEISURE CHANGING ROOMS – SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING REQUEST (REPORT G – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 12)

The Council currently has a programme of capital works designed to make all of its buildings compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The Cabinet is recommending a supplementary capital estimate to enable such works at Applemore Health and Leisure Centre to be undertaken.

In association with this the Cabinet has agreed, subject to the agreement of the recommendation below, a supplementary Revenue estimate of £12,000 in 2008/09 for the loss of income arising from the completion of the works required to the wet changing rooms at Applemore Health and Leisure Centre.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary Capital estimate of £80,000 be approved in 2008/9 to enable the completion of works required under the Disability Discrimination Act to the wet changing rooms at Applemore Health and Leisure Centre.

11. PROVISIONAL FINAL ACCOUNTS AND FINAL FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2007/08 (REPORT H – 4 JUNE 2008) (MINUTE NO. 13)

The Cabinet has considered an updated final financial monitoring report together with the provisional outturn position on the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, the Capital Programme and in Commercial Services. Members noted that overall the Council's performance was good. The major variations within the year have been as a result of interest rate changes and the Local Authorities Business Grant Initiative funding, neither of which has been possible to predict.

The position of the Housing Revenue Account has improved although there has been some slippage in both that and the Council's Capital Programme.

RECOMMENDED:

(a) That the following transfers be made from the General Fund:

- **£109,000 to the Committed Schemes Reserve (Previously approved £185,000)**
- **£516,000 to the Capital Programme Reserve (Previously approved £447,000)**

(b) That the balance on the General Fund Replacements and Renewals Reserve at 31 March 2008, estimated at £1.669m, be transferred to the Capital Programme Reserve.

12. AMENDMENT TO SURVEILLANCE POLICY – AUTHORISED OFFICERS – 4 JUNE 2008 (MINUTE NO. 14)

Following the senior management restructure the Cabinet has agreed changes to the delegations of functions under the Council's Surveillance Policy.

Members were pleased to note that, following a routine report by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners, the Council had been commended as being exemplary in its operation under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act procedures.

13. THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (SCS) AND ACTION PLAN (REPORT A – 7 JULY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 18)

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) identifies the priorities for partnership based actions in the New Forest and provides a focus for all Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) partners to work towards a common vision and set of improvement outcomes.

During the past year the Partnership has been reviewing the Community Strategy, compiling evidence and working with both NFDC and New Forest National Park planning authorities and the Hampshire Strategic Partnership to achieve alignment of direction and avoid duplication of effort.

The new SCS has been developed in tandem with the development of the Local Development Framework. It has also been shaped by the results of the "Future Matters" consultation which has provided a sound evidence base and data for the agreed priorities and outcomes.

The LSP has approved the Strategy and the Cabinet are pleased with the excellent opportunities it affords partners to work together. Members noted that the LSP, whilst supporting the Action Plan, had debated some transport issues raised in it and their appropriateness for the LSP. Some of the issues involved a number of partners and it was therefore correct that those topics were reflected in the Action Plan. However, it was agreed that it would be useful for the Transport Community Action Network (CAN) to consider whether the actions fully covered the aspirations in the Strategy.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Sustainable Community Strategy for New Forest District and the 2008/09 Action Plan be approved.

14. PARSONAGE BARN LANE, RINGWOOD – DISPOSAL OF LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING (REPORT B – 7 JULY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 19)

The Cabinet has agreed to the disposal of a parcel of land in Parsonage Barn Lane, Ringwood to Raglan Housing Association to enable them to develop eight affordable homes to be allocated to applicants from the Council's Homesearch Register. The scheme will consist of six 2 bedroom houses and two 3 bedroom houses. Ringwood has a high number of households on the Council's Homesearch Register and this development will help towards meeting housing need in the area.

15. MARSH LANE DEPOT OFFICES REFURBISHMENT / IMPROVEMENTS – SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL BID (REPORT C – 7 JULY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 20)

The Cabinet has considered proposals for the second phase of works to stabilise and update remaining office accommodation at Marsh Lane depot and address future storage needs. The improvement works proposed have been drawn up following a full structural survey and addressed the concerns relating to the instability of the building. Officers are confident that the work will provide a long term solution at the site.

RECOMMENDED:

That a supplementary capital bid of £76,000 to undertake the phase 2 refurbishment and stabilisation works to the main Building Works offices be approved.

16. EXTRA CARE AND ENHANCED CARE HOUSING (REPORT D – 7 JULY 2008) (MINUTE NO. 21)

The Cabinet has agreed to a progressive designation of up to 50% of the Council's existing sheltered housing schemes as extra care or enhanced care housing.

Working in partnership with Hampshire County Council, as part of the Older People's Wellbeing Strategy, a county wide approach to dealing with older people's issues has been established. This joint working will allow many of the policies needed to support the housing needs of older people to be developed. There is an increasingly steady rise in the elderly population and considerable work will be needed in the future to meet demand.

As part of the process of developing extra care housing within the district, a range of types of accommodation will be necessary from traditional sheltered housing through to dedicated new build extra care housing. In between these two types of housing will be enhanced care housing which will meet many of the desirable aspects of extra care housing but because of building constraints is unlikely to be fully compliant extra care housing. Many of NFDC's existing sheltered units will fall into this category.

The Council currently has 10 units of extra care sheltered housing based at Barfields Court in Lymington. Of the total of 539 units of sheltered accommodation within the district some will be inappropriate for conversion, and some will need excessive levels of expenditure to be converted. The proposal is therefore to designate up to 50% of the units as available for either extra care or enhanced care.

Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this proposal, as and when existing sheltered schemes are identified as being appropriate for extra care housing some conversion and improvement works may be necessary to meet the essential criteria. Such works will be the subject of a bid against the annual Planned Maintenance and Improvement works that are recommended each year.

Partnership work will continue with Hampshire County Council to increase the provision of extra care housing within the District to meet current and future needs.

**17. BUDGET ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMETABLE (REPORT E – 7 JULY 2008)
(MINUTE NO. 22)**

The Cabinet has agreed a revised annual budget timetable in the light of changes to the senior management structure and the timing of government funding announcements.

The revised process will build upon the role of portfolios as set out in the Corporate Plan and enable review panels and committees to oversee its delivery within the annual budget process.

**18. TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2007/08 – ANNUAL REPORT (REPORT F – 7 JULY 2008)
(MINUTE NO. 23)**

This Council has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector and operates its treasury management service in compliance with this Code and requirements. The prime objective of the treasury management activity is the effective management of risk, and that its borrowing activities are undertaken in a prudent, affordable and sustainable basis.

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

In considering the annual report the Cabinet noted that the Council has generated an additional £370,000 from investments and has maintained good performance against benchmarks, despite a year in which there have been five base interest rate changes.

The Cabinet were pleased to note the report and the continuing excellent record of achievement by the Council

**Cllr M J Kendal
CHAIRMAN**

(Report of Cabinet 070508-040608-070708)