

15 SEPTEMBER 2008

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 15 September 2008.

- p Cllr P R Woods - Chairman
- p Cllr L R Puttock - 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
- e G F Dart
- p S P Davies
- p W H Dow
- p 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 J D Heron
- 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
- p Mrs K J Lord
- p Mrs P J Lovelace
- p B D Lucas
- p Mrs A E McEvoy
- p Mrs M McLean

Councillors:

- p G J Parkes
- p Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
- p J Penwarden
- 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
- e Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs S I Snowden
- p A J Swain
- e M H Thierry
- p A R Tinsley
- p D B Tipp
- p C R Treleaven
- p F P Vickers
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p R A Wappet
- p J G Ward
- e A Weeks
- e Dr M N Whitehead
- p C A Wise
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, B Jackson, J Mascall, D Atwill, Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens.

25. MINUTES (PAPER A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2008, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Kendal, Rice and Mrs Rostand in Minute No. 28 item 6.

Cllrs Mrs McLean, Parkes, Mrs Robinson, Vickers and M Wade in Minute No. 28 item 8.

Cllrs Beck, Davies, Hutchins, Rice, Mrs Snowden, Ward and Woods in Minute No. 29.

27. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman reported that he had recently met with Rhys Jones, a young man who had climbed Mount Everest and whom the Chairman had supported on his quest down the Mississippi. Together they had opened the eight-one-six (816) gym at Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre. They were joined by dozens of young people, the media, the health and leisure management team, and Cabinet members, to launch this worthwhile fitness initiative.

The Chairman announced that he had had the privilege of receiving a replica of the London 2012 Olympic Flag following the close of the Beijing Olympics. At a ceremony that coincided with the official ending of the games in China, and the start of celebrations outside Buckingham Palace, both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman had raised the new flag at Lymington Health and Leisure Centre. This event marked the Council's commitment to supporting young people in their sporting aspirations for 2012.

The Chairman offered belated congratulations to the three local Olympic heroes; Ben Ainslie, Nick Rogers and Pippa Wilson. All were members of the Royal Lymington Yacht Club of which the Chairman was an honorary member. The Council and Lymington and Pennington Town Council hoped to be able to recognise the achievements of these sailors at a joint civic reception later in the year.

The Chairman reported that it was with great pleasure that he had hosted the Council's civic day the previous Friday, 12 September 2008. 30 civic heads from Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight had met at Hythe and were taken on a trip along the beautiful coastline to Lymington. After lunch at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, attendees were taken to Exbury Gardens for a trip on Mr Eddy's train and a tour of the gardens. The civic day was an essential feature of the Chairman's work; which gave the Council the opportunity to showcase the district and to demonstrate that the Council was promoting the diverse activities taking place in the Forest.

28. REPORT OF CABINET.

Cllr Kendal declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 6 of the Report of the Cabinet as a Trustee of the Countryside Education Trust. Cllr Mrs Rostand declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the same item as a member of a local fund raising group supporting the Countryside Education Trust. There was no discussion on this item.

Cllr Rice declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the same item as a Trustee of the Countryside Education Trust. There was no discussion on this item.

Cllrs Mrs McLean, Parkes, Mrs Robinson, Vickers and M Wade declared personal interests in item 8 of the Report of the Cabinet as members of Hythe and Dibden Parish Council. They did not consider their interest to be prejudicial so remained in the meeting, took part in discussion and voted.

Cllr Kendal, the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the meetings held on 6 August and 3 September 2008.

In presenting the Cabinet's report Cllr Kendal announced that after six years, he would be retiring as the Leader of the Council with effect from Friday, 31 October and that a new Leader would be elected at the next meeting of the Council on 27 October to take up office on 1 November. Cllr Kendal said that he had thoroughly enjoyed his term as Leader, and was proud to be leaving the Council in a strong financial position. However he expressed the view that the Council would face challenging times in setting its budgets with severely restricted funding expected from the Government. Notwithstanding this, he was confident that the Cabinet working with Panels and Committees would manage this challenge.

Members of the Council spoke highly of Cllr Kendal and the Council's achievements during his term of office as Leader. They felt that had offered strong leadership while acting fairly and reasonably. Other members spoke of his dedication and commitment to residents of the Forest.

The Leader thanked members for their kind wishes.

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

RESOLVED:

That the reports be received and the recommendations adopted.

29. REPORT OF GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE.

Cllrs Beck, Davies, Hutchins, Mrs Snowden, Rice, Ward and Woods declared personal and prejudicial interests in this item as members of New Milton Town Council. There was no discussion on this item.

Cllr Shotter, Vice-Chairman of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, presented the report of the meeting held on 12 September 2008.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendation adopted.

30. QUESTIONS.

There were none.

31. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' QUESTION TIME.

Question from: Cllr Mrs Lord to Cllr Rickman, Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters Portfolio Holder

“Please could you inform me of the proposals that you have for increasing the commitment of NFDC to the provision of facilities for young people in the district?”

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder replied that 816 Gyms were evidence of the Council's commitment to provide specialist facilities for young people at all 5 Health and Leisure Centres. Applemore and Ringwood had completed the rollout of the gyms and the programme continued with Lymington in 2009/10 followed by Totton which would be part of the College redevelopment. An options appraisal for a scheme at New Milton was currently underway.

816 Clubs provided by the Council were clubs for young people developed in response to an expressed wish from that age group for better access to facilities. The club had proved hugely popular and continued to grow with nearly 800 members accessing up to 70 plus activity sessions across the Health and Leisure Centres including fitness suites, dance and fitness classes and swimming.

In respect of club activities, the Council encouraged young people to take part in specialist activities through the club programme which included gymnastics, trampolining, martial arts, roller hockey, basketball, swimming and badminton.

The Council currently taught over 4,000 young people to swim and the programme was shortly to expand to include life saving, water polo, diving and synchronised swimming.

Cllr Mrs Lord asked as a supplementary question whether the Portfolio Holder would consider implementing similar schemes in the district to that of the 'Garage' in Totton. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would contact Totton and Eling Town Council, who were responsible for this scheme, and examine whether it would be possible to implement similar projects across the district.

32. SMOKE FREE LEGISLATION – DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS.

RESOLVED:

That the delegations set out in item 7 of the agenda be approved.

33. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

There were no changes.

34. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) was currently campaigning to extend the eligibility to claim the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to people with severe sight loss. The RNIB was holding a lobby of Parliament on 15 October. In order to meet this deadline and to encourage the District's MPs to lobby Government, the Chairman considered that this item was urgent and should be considered at the meeting.

The Leader proposed the following Motion: -

That this Council notes:

That blind people experience significant barriers to independent mobility.

That blind people are often isolated and find it difficult to access basic services without mobility assistance.

That many blind residents in this authority area find it difficult to access shops, supermarkets, Doctors, Dentists and community facilities and centres.

That our blind residents find it difficult to access many Council Services ranging from housing to voting without mobility support and face additional costs as a result, such as using taxis or private hire vehicles.

That this Council further notes:

That blind people are not entitled to the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance.

Loss of usable sight clearly causes significant independent mobility problems and incurs significant additional and unmet costs.

That blind people are in many parts of England excluded from social care support because their needs are not considered "critical" or "substantial".

Members of the Council expressed their concern regarding the Government's eligibility criteria for incapacity benefits and considered that residents with visual impairments and sight loss should be treated as a priority.

The motion was seconded and it was unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, the Rt Hon. James Purnell MP, expressing the concerns set out above;
- (b) That the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council write to local MPs asking that they sign up to EDM number 1982 and to write to the Secretary of State expressing the concerns; and

- (c) That the Royal National Institute of Blind People's (RNIB) campaign on securing the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance for blind people be supported.

CHAIRMAN

(DEMOCRAT/CL150908/MINUTES.DOC)