

23 FEBRUARY 2009

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 23 February 2009.

- 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
- p G F Dart
- p S P Davies
- p W H Dow
- p L T Dunsdon
- e 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 P E Hickman
- e 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
- e Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
- p J Penwarden
- e M P Reid
- p A W Rice
- p B Rickman
- e W S Rippon-Swaine
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- p Mrs A M Rostand
- p D J Russell
- p R F Scrivens
- p Lt Col M J Shand
- p A E J Shotter
- p Mrs B Smith
- p Mrs S I Snowden
- e 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
- p A Weeks
- e Dr M N Whitehead
- p C A Wise
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall, Miss G O'Rourke, Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

All members declared interests in Minute No. 59 – Report of Standards Committee.

57. MINUTES (PAPER A).**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2008, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

58. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman announced that since the last Council meeting he had represented the Council on various occasions both within the District Council's area and outside in the counties of Hampshire and Dorset. He thanked the Vice-Chairman who had attended several civic events in the Chairman's absence.

Equalities Standard Success

The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Council had been accredited Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. Following 3 days of scrutiny, interviews with elected members, officers and, perhaps more importantly, partner organisations and members of the community, the peer assessors had had no hesitation in making the award.

The accreditation confirmed that the Council's work on Equalities and Diversity within the community was as good as the best Councils in the country.

The Chairman thanked Helena Renwick and her Equalities team for their hard work in helping the Council achieve this excellent result.

Civic Service and Charity Evening

The Chairman reminded members that his Civic Service would take place on Sunday 8 March, and would be held jointly with the Mayor of New Milton, Cllr John Hutchins. His Charity Evening would take place on Saturday 28 March. The Chairman relied on members' support for his charity evening to help raise funds for Oakhaven Hospice and First Opportunities. Further information could be obtained from Donna Miller.

If members were not able to attend the Charity Evening, the Chairman asked members to consider buying raffle tickets that would be drawn on the night. Prizes included a trip for two on Eurostar, a spa day at Careys Manor, tea at Chewton Glen, a palm top computer from Status, and authentic signed memorabilia from some of the top football clubs in England. Tickets were available from the Democratic Services Section.

59. REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

Cllr Hutchins, Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee, presented the report of the meeting held on 30 January 2009.

Item 1 – Members Allowances Scheme – Automatic Up-rating 2009/10

Cllr Rickman proposed the following amendment: -

That recommendation (a) be amended to read as follows:

'That the Council notes that the basic, special responsibility, dependant carers' and co-optees' allowances embodied in the current Members' Allowances Scheme are, according to the provisions in the Scheme, due to be uprated by 4% with effect from 1 April 2009, but that, in the light of the current global economic recession and the Council's wish to minimise the impact on the local taxpayer, all members' allowances be frozen at current levels for 2009/10'.

And that recommendation (b) be deleted.

Cllr Wise seconded the amendment.

Upon a vote the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Council was carried.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendation be adopted, subject to the amendments set out above.

60. REPORT OF CABINET.

Cllr Rickman, the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the meeting held on 4 February 2009.

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

Item 5 - The Medium Term Financial Plan – Annual Budget 2009/10

Cllr Rickman made the statement on the Administration's proposed budget attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes. In moving the recommendation, he proposed the following amendments:-

- (i) That recommendation (c) be amended to provide for a General Fund Net Budget Requirement of £22,667,940, and not £22,700,000.
- (ii) That recommendation (d) be amended to provide for a Band D Council Tax of £152.71 and not £153.16.
- (iii) That in recommendation (f), the figures "2008/09" in the second line be deleted and replaced with "2009/10".

Cllr Wise seconded the amendments.

Cllr D Harrison made the statement attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes and moved amendments giving alternative budget proposals for 2009/10 (as set out in Appendix 2).

Cllr Mrs Robinson seconded.

Members discussed the budget proposals together with the amendments.

In supporting the budget proposed by Cllr Rickman members expressed the view that the proposed budget was, in light of the exceptional financial situation facing the Council, well thought out and in the best interests of the local taxpayer to maintain the Council's high services.

Some members expressed concern at the way in which the Government set the increase in the rent for Council houses, which for 2009/10 would be 5.8% and suggested that the Council phase the rent increase over two years on the basis that RPI in September 2009 might be 0%. Cllr Mrs Cleary, the Housing Portfolio Holder said that it would be unwise to do this as there were no guarantees that the RPI would drop that low. She had written to all tenants explaining the situation regarding rent setting and had received replies supporting the Council's campaign to lobby the Government to change the current arrangements. The Portfolio Holder also explained that the monies within the HRA reserves were needed for housing repair works in order for the Council to meet Decent Homes Standards. The reserves in the HRA were for the benefit of the tenants and the improvement of their homes.

Many members felt that Cllr D Harrison's proposal to implement a 0% increase in the Council Tax and the use of reserves to offset this was irresponsible given the turbulent economic climate. The Council's finances were secure in the short term, but if the recession continued the Council would need its reserves to maintain services.

Other members expressed the view that in exceptional financial times, established ways of working were not effective or sufficiently dynamic and the Council should therefore be courageous in its approach to financial planning. They felt that the Opposition had offered an innovative budget, which put the needs of the residents first and planned for future challenges such as environmental issues which would need further investment.

Cllr Wise the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder felt that the budget proposed by the Opposition was unsound and financially unviable. He considered that the budget proposed by the Leader of the Council was well balanced and would better ensure the security of the Council and its residents.

Cllr Mrs Robinson in supporting the Leader of the Opposition's proposed budget, said that in these unprecedented financial times the Council had to ensure that its financial policies were developed to minimise the impact of the recession on its residents, and that, by using reserves to offset a 0% Council Tax increase, the Council would be able to achieve this. She also felt that the Council should consider phasing the council house rent increase over a two year period in order to minimise this additional burden on tenants.

The Leader of the Opposition, in summing up said that his alternative budget showed originality and was fairer, safer and greener than that proposed by the Administration.

The Leader of the Council, in closing the debate, thanked Cabinet members for their support in preparing the budget. He felt that the Conservative Group offered a budget which was sound, safe, sensible and sustainable.

Upon a vote, the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition was lost.

Upon a vote, the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Council were carried.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted, subject to the following amendments to Item 5, the Medium Term Financial Plan – Annual Budget 2009/10: -

- (a) That recommendation (c) be amended to provide for a General Fund Net Budget Requirement of £22,667,940, and not £22,700,000;
- (b) That recommendation (d) be amended to provide for a Band D Council Tax of £152.71 and not £153.16; and
- (c) That in recommendation (f), the figures “2008/09” in the second line be deleted and replaced with “2009/10”.

61. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

62. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' QUESTION TIME.

Question from: Cllr Hickman to Cllr Treleaven (Planning & Transportation Portfolio Holder)

“Could the Portfolio Holder please reassure members that revenue from parking in the District that exceeds the cost of managing the service will be ring-fenced for investment in traffic management improvements?”

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder replied that in relation to the question of ‘ring-fencing’ Council revenues and expenditure, unless legally required to so do, the Council had not been in favour of such a financial policy, for the simple reason that it would lead to a rigid inflexibility of operating Council services, irrespective of changing circumstances and needs. The Council could end up with a surplus in one such ring-fenced account with no immediate prospect of using it that year, whilst at the same time having a shortfall in Central Government funding for a front-line service on which residents relied. The Council would, under a policy of ring-fencing, be unable to deploy resources accordingly.

Councillors would remember one such case last year, with regard to extending the over-60s and disabled concessionary bus pass to residents on an all-day basis, where the Council was able to re-deploy savings from one area to re-introduce this much-welcomed concession. Under a policy of ring-fencing the Council would not have been able to do this. The Council would not therefore be ring-fencing income from parking charges.

With regard to the income raised from off-street parking charges relative to expenditure on traffic and transport management schemes, the Management budget book for the Planning and Transportation Portfolio for

the current year was instructive. Councillors would be able to see from this that the net income from car parking charges was approximately £1.1 million, whilst the net expenditure on traffic and transport management was about £2.5 million, that was, net overall expenditure over income of £1.4 million.

In examining how the £2.5 million was spent, the sum included concessionary fares over and above the Government grant, including all day passes for qualifying residents, young peoples' and disabled peoples' travel vouchers, maintaining street lighting, enforcing on-street parking restrictions, traffic calming and anti-congestion measures, supporting community transport for those with mobility problems, improving cycle and pedestrian accesses, 'green' transport support funding as for the New Forest Tour, the Community Rail Partnership and the railway stations shuttle bus, to name only some of the Portfolio expenditure items.

The likely outcome for this year and the budget for 09/10 would show a net expenditure on traffic and transport management measures of approximately £900,000 above the income from parking. This was largely due to the cost to this Council of the statutory concessionary bus pass scheme proving to be less onerous than the Council had been led to believe this time last year.

The Council had a targeted net expenditure of nearly £1 million more than parking receipts. The Portfolio Holder concluded that if members considered that the Council was spending too little on traffic and transport management, then he would ask for suggestions as to which and by how much the parking charges should be increased. Alternatively, if members considered that parking income was too high, suggestions should be given as to which service should be cut. The Portfolio Holder concluded that he hoped members would agree that the Council had got the balance about right.

In response to a supplementary question regarding "yellow line" parking enforcement in Pennington and Fordingbridge, the Portfolio Holder said that he would look into this matter.

63. THE 2009/2010 COUNCIL TAX (REPORT B).

Arising from the Council's decision under Minute No. 60, a revised Report B was tabled.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That it be noted that at its meeting on 15 December 2008 the Council calculated the following amounts for the year 2009/10 in accordance with regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992: -
 - (a) 72,350.90 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its council tax base for the year.

(b)	LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	
	ASHURST & COLBURY	925.00
	BEAULIEU	518.80
	BOLDRE	1,050.00
	BRAMSHAW	345.70
	BRANSGORE	1,869.80
	BREAMORE	180.00
	BROCKENHURST	1,844.80
	BURLEY	781.00
	COPYTHORNE	1,221.50
	DAMERHAM	239.90
	DENNY LODGE	155.70
	EAST BOLDRE	397.40
	ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	595.30
	EXBURY & LEPE	110.40
	FAWLEY	4,864.30
	FORDINGBRIDGE	2,383.00
	GODSHILL	213.90
	HALE	267.80
	HORDLE	2,434.90
	HYDE	506.90
	HYPHE & DIBDEN	7,786.90
	LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	7,074.90
	LYNDHURST	1,397.70
	MARCHWOOD	2,118.90
	MARTIN	188.50
	MILFORD-ON-SEA	2,735.20
	MINSTEAD	361.60
	NETLEY MARSH	829.80
	NEW MILTON	10,862.80
	RINGWOOD	5,447.70
	ROCKBOURNE	166.30
	SANDLEHEATH	273.90
	SOPLEY	300.90
	SWAY	1,679.90
	TOTTON & ELING	9,872.30
	WHITSBURY	102.80
	WOODGREEN	244.70
		<u>72,350.90</u>

being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(2) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2009/10 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992: -

(a) £104,248,809 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act.

- (b) £76,999,660 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.
- (c) £27,249,149 being the amount by which the aggregate at 10.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 10.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
- (d) £11,619,230 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant, increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its collection fund to its general fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Council Tax Surplus), and increased by the amount of any sum which the Council estimates will be transferred from its collection fund to its general fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Community Charge Surplus).
- (e) £216.03 being the amount at 10.2(c) above less the amount at 10.2(d) above, all divided by the amount at 10.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year.
- (f) £4,581,209 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (g) £152.71 being the amount at 10.2(e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 10.2(f) above by the amount at 10.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.

(h)

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	177.30
BEAULIEU	168.13
BOLDRE	170.33
BRAMSHAW	167.17
BRANSGORE	205.33
BREAMORE	174.93
BROCKENHURST	184.39
BURLEY	165.51
COPYTHORNE	161.06
DAMERHAM	177.72
DENNY LODGE	181.61
EAST BOLDRE	190.46
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	176.86
EXBURY & LEPE	163.81
FAWLEY	247.18
FORDINGBRIDGE	221.18
GODSHILL	197.01
HALE	182.80
HORDLE	189.97
HYDE	165.53
HYTHE & DIBDEN	223.15
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	239.76
LYNDHURST	195.68
MARCHWOOD	248.61
MARTIN	177.51
MILFORD-ON-SEA	183.89
MINSTEAD	173.45
NETLEY MARSH	163.89
NEW MILTON	199.12
RINGWOOD	221.90
ROCKBOURNE	176.76
SANDLEHEATH	169.50
SOPLEY	215.85
SWAY	182.08
TOTTON & ELING	260.82
WHITSBURY	171.68
WOODGREEN	176.13

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 10.2(g) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 10.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(i) PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA

These are the District plus Town/Parish Council elements only.

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	118.20	137.90	157.60	177.30	216.70	256.10	295.50	354.60
BEAULIEU	112.09	130.77	149.45	168.13	205.49	242.85	280.22	336.26
BOLDRE	113.55	132.48	151.40	170.33	208.18	246.03	283.88	340.66
BRAMSHAW	111.45	130.02	148.60	167.17	204.32	241.47	278.62	334.34
BRANSGORE	136.89	159.70	182.52	205.33	250.96	296.59	342.22	410.66
BREAMORE	116.62	136.06	155.49	174.93	213.80	252.68	291.55	349.86
BROCKENHURST	122.93	143.41	163.90	184.39	225.37	266.34	307.32	368.78
BURLEY	110.34	128.73	147.12	165.51	202.29	239.07	275.85	331.02
COPYTHORNE	107.37	125.27	143.16	161.06	196.85	232.64	268.43	322.12
DAMERHAM	118.48	138.23	157.97	177.72	217.21	256.71	296.20	355.44
DENNY LODGE	121.07	141.25	161.43	181.61	221.97	262.33	302.68	363.22
EAST BOLDRE	126.97	148.14	169.30	190.46	232.78	275.11	317.43	380.92
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	117.91	137.56	157.21	176.86	216.16	255.46	294.77	353.72
EXBURY & LEPE	109.21	127.41	145.61	163.81	200.21	236.61	273.02	327.62
FAWLEY	164.79	192.25	219.72	247.18	302.11	357.04	411.97	494.36
FORDINGBRIDGE	147.45	172.03	196.60	221.18	270.33	319.48	368.63	442.36
GODSHILL	131.34	153.23	175.12	197.01	240.79	284.57	328.35	394.02
HALE	121.87	142.18	162.49	182.80	223.42	264.04	304.67	365.60
HORDLE	126.65	147.75	168.86	189.97	232.19	274.40	316.62	379.94
HYDE	110.35	128.75	147.14	165.53	202.31	239.10	275.88	331.06
HYTHE & DIBDEN	148.77	173.56	198.36	223.15	272.74	322.33	371.92	446.30
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	159.84	186.48	213.12	239.76	293.04	346.32	399.60	479.52
LYNDHURST	130.45	152.20	173.94	195.68	239.16	282.65	326.13	391.36
MARCHWOOD	165.74	193.36	220.99	248.61	303.86	359.10	414.35	497.22
MARTIN	118.34	138.06	157.79	177.51	216.96	256.40	295.85	355.02
MILFORD-ON-SEA	122.59	143.03	163.46	183.89	224.75	265.62	306.48	367.78
MINSTEAD	115.63	134.91	154.18	173.45	211.99	250.54	289.08	346.90
NETLEY MARSH	109.26	127.47	145.68	163.89	200.31	236.73	273.15	327.78
NEW MILTON	132.75	154.87	177.00	199.12	243.37	287.62	331.87	398.24
RINGWOOD	147.93	172.59	197.24	221.90	271.21	320.52	369.83	443.80
ROCKBOURNE	117.84	137.48	157.12	176.76	216.04	255.32	294.60	353.52
SANDLEHEATH	113.00	131.83	150.67	169.50	207.17	244.83	282.50	339.00
SOPLEY	143.90	167.88	191.87	215.85	263.82	311.78	359.75	431.70
SWAY	121.39	141.62	161.85	182.08	222.54	263.00	303.47	364.16
TOTTON & ELING	173.88	202.86	231.84	260.82	318.78	376.74	434.70	521.64
WHITSBURY	114.45	133.53	152.60	171.68	209.83	247.98	286.13	343.36
WOODGREEN	117.42	136.99	156.56	176.13	215.27	254.41	293.55	352.26

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 10.2(g) and 10.2(h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts

to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (3) That it be noted that for the year 2009/10 the Hampshire County Council, the Hampshire Police Authority and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	678.78	791.91	905.04	1,018.17	1,244.43	1,470.69	1,696.95	2,036.34
HAMPSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY	94.74	110.53	126.32	142.11	173.69	205.27	236.85	284.22
HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY	40.20	46.90	53.60	60.30	73.70	87.10	100.50	120.60
	813.72	949.34	1,084.96	1,220.58	1,491.82	1,763.06	2,034.30	2,441.16

- (4) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 10.2(i) and 10.3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwellings shown on the next page: -

PART OF THE COUNCIL'S AREA

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	931.92	1,087.24	1,242.56	1,397.88	1,708.52	2,019.16	2,329.80	2,795.76
BEAULIEU	925.81	1,080.11	1,234.41	1,388.71	1,697.31	2,005.91	2,314.52	2,777.42
BOLDRE	927.27	1,081.82	1,236.36	1,390.91	1,700.00	2,009.09	2,318.18	2,781.82
BRAMSHAW	925.17	1,079.36	1,233.56	1,387.75	1,696.14	2,004.53	2,312.92	2,775.50
BRANSGORE	950.61	1,109.04	1,267.48	1,425.91	1,742.78	2,059.65	2,376.52	2,851.82
BREAMORE	930.34	1,085.40	1,240.45	1,395.51	1,705.62	2,015.74	2,325.85	2,791.02
BROCKENHURST	936.65	1,092.75	1,248.86	1,404.97	1,717.19	2,029.40	2,341.62	2,809.94
BURLEY	924.06	1,078.07	1,232.08	1,386.09	1,694.11	2,002.13	2,310.15	2,772.18
COPYTHORNE	921.09	1,074.61	1,228.12	1,381.64	1,688.67	1,995.70	2,302.73	2,763.28
DAMERHAM	932.20	1,087.57	1,242.93	1,398.30	1,709.03	2,019.77	2,330.50	2,796.60
DENNY LODGE	934.79	1,090.59	1,246.39	1,402.19	1,713.79	2,025.39	2,336.98	2,804.38
EAST BOLDRE	940.69	1,097.48	1,254.26	1,411.04	1,724.60	2,038.17	2,351.73	2,822.08
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IF	931.63	1,086.90	1,242.17	1,397.44	1,707.98	2,018.52	2,329.07	2,794.88
EXBURY & LEPE	922.93	1,076.75	1,230.57	1,384.39	1,692.03	1,999.67	2,307.32	2,768.78
FAWLEY	978.51	1,141.59	1,304.68	1,467.76	1,793.93	2,120.10	2,446.27	2,935.52
FORDINGBRIDGE	961.17	1,121.37	1,281.56	1,441.76	1,762.15	2,082.54	2,402.93	2,883.52
GODSHILL	945.06	1,102.57	1,260.08	1,417.59	1,732.61	2,047.63	2,362.65	2,835.18
HALE	935.59	1,091.52	1,247.45	1,403.38	1,715.24	2,027.10	2,338.97	2,806.76
HORDLE	940.37	1,097.09	1,253.82	1,410.55	1,724.01	2,037.46	2,350.92	2,821.10
HYDE	924.07	1,078.09	1,232.10	1,386.11	1,694.13	2,002.16	2,310.18	2,772.22
HYPHE & DIBDEN	962.49	1,122.90	1,283.32	1,443.73	1,764.56	2,085.39	2,406.22	2,887.46
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	973.56	1,135.82	1,298.08	1,460.34	1,784.86	2,109.38	2,433.90	2,920.68
LYNDHURST	944.17	1,101.54	1,258.90	1,416.26	1,730.98	2,045.71	2,360.43	2,832.52
MARCHWOOD	979.46	1,142.70	1,305.95	1,469.19	1,795.68	2,122.16	2,448.65	2,938.38
MARTIN	932.06	1,087.40	1,242.75	1,398.09	1,708.78	2,019.46	2,330.15	2,796.18
MILFORD-ON-SEA	936.31	1,092.37	1,248.42	1,404.47	1,716.57	2,028.68	2,340.78	2,808.94
MINSTEAD	929.35	1,084.25	1,239.14	1,394.03	1,703.81	2,013.60	2,323.38	2,788.06
NETLEY MARSH	922.98	1,076.81	1,230.64	1,384.47	1,692.13	1,999.79	2,307.45	2,768.94
NEW MILTON	946.47	1,104.21	1,261.96	1,419.70	1,735.19	2,050.68	2,366.17	2,839.40
RINGWOOD	961.65	1,121.93	1,282.20	1,442.48	1,763.03	2,083.58	2,404.13	2,884.96
ROCKBOURNE	931.56	1,086.82	1,242.08	1,397.34	1,707.86	2,018.38	2,328.90	2,794.68
SANDLEHEATH	926.72	1,081.17	1,235.63	1,390.08	1,698.99	2,007.89	2,316.80	2,780.16
SOPLEY	957.62	1,117.22	1,276.83	1,436.43	1,755.64	2,074.84	2,394.05	2,872.86
SWAY	935.11	1,090.96	1,246.81	1,402.66	1,714.36	2,026.06	2,337.77	2,805.32
TOTTON & ELING	987.60	1,152.20	1,316.80	1,481.40	1,810.60	2,139.80	2,469.00	2,962.80
WHITSBURY	928.17	1,082.87	1,237.56	1,392.26	1,701.65	2,011.04	2,320.43	2,784.52
WOODGREEN	931.14	1,086.33	1,241.52	1,396.71	1,707.09	2,017.47	2,327.85	2,793.42

64. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS.**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Cllrs Dow and Dr Mrs Whitehead be appointed as substitute members on the Industrial Relations Committee;
- (b) That in accordance with the provisions of Section 17(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council agrees that the principles of the proportionate representation set out in Section 15(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 shall not apply to the Planning Development Control Committee and that one additional place on that Committee be allocated to the Conservative Group; and

- (c) That Cllr Lagdon be appointed to the Planning Development Control Committee in place of Cllr Dunsdon.

CHAIRMAN

Attachments: Minute No. 60 – Appendix 1 and 2

(DEMOCRAT/CL230209/MINUTES.DOC)

Council – Monday, 23 February 2009

Budget Speech

Cllr Barry Rickman

Leader, New Forest District Council Conservative Group

- When I became Leader I said that I wanted New Forest District Council to understand and respond to the needs of its people and its communities.
- It was already apparent that we were facing a worsening economic climate, presided over by a complacent and negligent Labour Government. What we do not know and what no one yet knows is how long and deep this recession will be.
- What is clear is that strong and responsive leadership from local councils is more important than ever, to help our residents and local businesses through these difficult times.
- That is why in making some of the toughest budget decisions tonight which we have ever faced, we will do all we can to preserve the vital services we provide while keeping the tax burden as low as possible.
- Leadership must start with ourselves – the elected members. And that is why I proposed that we should not accept the increase in Members' allowances which our independent advisors have recommended.
- The sum saved may be small but it is a clear signal of our intent and will enable us to keep down the increase in council tax.
- We will be continuing and increasing our search for efficiencies. Because we have never benefitted from the increase in Government grants which went to other parts of the country we are used to having to save £1m from our base budget each year. Major reductions in our sources of income mean we will need to save much more.
- Our sound financial stewardship in the past ensures that we do not need to panic. We have acted decisively. We have already introduced a robust regime for managing vacancies and curbing our wage bill. We will reduce our spending on supplies and services and cut back our capital programme aspirations. This will not itself be enough. Early in the year we will be revealing a comprehensive efficiency and savings strategy which will look closely at all areas of service.
- But it is important that we do not renege on our promises, even in these difficult times. So we will be extending CCTV coverage to New Milton and Hythe, as we promised.
- We will also be adapting our services to respond to those who need help arising from the recession. We have already organised a series of seminars aimed at helping small businesses survive and we will continue to work closely with the New Forest Business Partnership. We will ensure our benefit services respond to the increased demands for individuals in need. We will support the volunteering and charitable sector. We will adapt the programmes of our Health

and Leisure Centres to peoples' changing needs and finances. We will look at new ways of providing affordable housing especially in our rural areas.

- And talking of housing we will keep the pressure up on government to change the unfair system which puts the rent of our tenants up by almost 6% so that £8.5 million can be taken away from the area completely to prop its own bankrupt regime.
- And finally we will continue our prudent approach to council tax setting. Our medium term strategy is based on a 3% annual increase. In recent years we have paid particular attention to ensure that any rise is below the rise in pension increases. We know this affects many of the more vulnerable in our society. And although the increase based on inflation in October last year is quite high, we also know that many are affected by much smaller returns on their hard won investments. That is why we will be reducing the council tax increase as far as we can. Freezing members allowances allows me to now propose a rise of 2.7%.
- I cannot finish without a few thank yous. To Mel Kendal, for passing over an authority in such good shape. To David Harrison for his offer made at Cabinet, which I accept, to work more co-operatively in these unprecedented circumstances. To our employees who are responding to these challenges with their customary commitment and invention. And to my Cabinet colleagues and particularly to Colin Wise who is giving outstanding guidance to help steer us through the difficult financial climate as outlined in his budget speech at Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report.
- This is indeed our toughest budget ever. But by making the difficult decisions now I believe we will help the Council and more importantly the Community whom we serve not just to survive but eventually to recover.

Council – Monday, 23 February 2009

Budget Speech

Cllr David Harrison

Leader, New Forest District Council Liberal Democrat Group

May I start by congratulating the leader on his first budget speech. I think his audience was receptive, just as I'm sure they will be open minded to what I have to say!

Budgets are important. It is part of the job of the ruling political group to produce one.

Budgets produced by opposition groups are usually perceived as less important, particularly when the ruling group have been instructed and trained to vote it down, whatever the content.

With this in mind, I would like to propose doubling the allowances of all Conservative Councillors..... but that of course would not be responsible!

Like many local authorities, New Forest District Council is faced with a very serious shortfall in resources.

The settlement it receives from government to support the funding of services is very low. The complex formula for working out how much each individual council gets from central government coffers means that whilst councils serving areas of greater than average social deprivation receive more than the average 4-5%, our council receives less than 1%.

The ability of the council to make up any difference through raising charges is limited. Increasing charges for services like car-parking is politically unpopular. If charges are raised for the use of sporting and leisure facilities, demand drops and revenue may actually go down.

Raising the level of council tax used to be an easy option. However, above inflation increases in council tax in past years has made a fundamentally unfair tax, now grossly unfair.

One of the ways we Liberal Democrats have always distinguished ourselves from the other main two parties, is in our commitment to scrap the council tax in favour of a local income tax. A tax related to ability to pay is much fairer. We believe in fairness.

Central government now threatens to cap any authority that increases the tax by a proportion that is deemed irresponsible. The Minister for Local Government has already announced that he expects council tax increases to be substantially below 5%. New Forest District Council has traditionally been prudent with finance and shrewd investments have yielded good interest earnings. However, with interest earnings dropping from 7% as low as 2% there will be a massive shortfall in returns. Each 1% decrease in interest rates equates to a loss to the Council of about £300,000.

So, the natural thing to do is for the council to look at cutting costs. This is a challenging task. Many of the Council's costs are fixed. Those that are not fixed have almost certainly been shaved in previous years. The ability of the council to reduce expenditure through efficiency savings year after year must be limited.

A further factor causing difficulty is that central government often makes new demands on local government, requiring it to assume additional responsibilities. Sometimes, these extras are fully funded, sometimes not. There is a point where it might no longer be possible to avoid redundancies, reductions in services and the closure of much valued facilities.

I believe all members of the council now recognise the scale of the challenge that we are faced with.

So, things are difficult for this Council, but also increasingly difficult for the people we serve. I'm particularly mindful of all those people who are council tenants, who are faced with an increase in rent of nearly 6%.

How can we help them?

I think also about local people who are finding it increasingly hard to make the household budget stretch. Increased costs of heating the home during this long cold winter, food costs, water bills, reduced values in pensions and share holdings – all these things compel us to do something beyond what has been done before.

No part of the services delivered should be overlooked. We should factor in major issues, for example the possibility of having a single headquarters, the extent to which we can devolve powers to Parish Councils, joint working with Hampshire County Council and other District & Borough Councils, the way the authority collects waste and the best use of our remaining assets.

I think the people who elect us, every one of us, will want officers and elected members, all members, to focus on the real challenge of making sure that New Forest District Council is fit for purpose in future years, that we don't hit the financial buffers and that we can provide those services that our constituents perceive as necessary.

Naturally, we as a group have a shared vision for the way we should move forward on particular issues. We believe the most pressing and immediate concern is the recession and how it impacts on residents and businesses in the district.

There is no less of a housing crisis than there was a year ago. Housing provision is a fundamental responsibility of this council. Once again, we need to remind ourselves that there are far too many people waiting on waiting lists, with no housing or housing that doesn't meet their needs.

We all appreciate that there are particular problems with providing housing in the New Forest District. I'm not alone in opposing particular schemes that would not have been right for the area I represent, or indeed don't provide adequate space for the intended occupants. It is difficult. But because it is difficult, we must try ever harder.

Unemployment is rising.

Our residents are finding it increasingly hard to meet council tax bills.

Conservatives don't seem willing to scrap this unfair tax in the same way as the Liberal Democrats would. However, we are where we are. We both need to find ways to ensure that council tax isn't even more of a burden than it already is.

The 5.8% increase on rents for council tenants is simply not acceptable. Whilst I welcome the representations made to government to change the rules, this isn't enough. We need to do more. I think we should stage the increase over a two year period. This would help the 40% of tenants who would otherwise be hit with the full increase and still keep the Housing Revenue Account moving in the right direction.

I think the District Council will now have to be even more pro-active in supporting businesses, especially small businesses in our town centres.

Tourism is very important to the district. With the drop in value of the sterling, against the Euro, there are obvious benefits to be had from holidaying in the New Forest as against the Costa Brava. This is a reminder that the current financial situation will throw up opportunities, as well as challenges.

We have an increasing role to play in the health agenda, both directly and indirectly. My group thinks it particularly important that the Leisure Centres continue to be managed and run by the District Council. We still maintain that the authority should not be providing a sun-bed facility. I sense that we are slowly but surely winning the argument, but that it clearly takes time for the health dangers associated with these sun-beds to be fully appreciated.

On crime and disorder, we are fully supportive of what has and is being done to ensure the council fulfils a key role in tackling problems. I will simply say, that let us not make unilateral decisions about withdrawing funding for services, without giving members the chance to scrutinise matters and checking the position of other partners first.

Our commitment to the climate change agenda remains undiminished. We are delighted that this authority has signed up to the Nottinghamshire Declaration. Experts are forecasting that the current economic problems may last a year or two. Frankly, nobody knows – except possibly our own Vince Cable. However, the decisions we take now and in future years relating to the environment will have consequences way beyond the short term.

I believe that one of the ways this council could be more effective is to take scrutiny more seriously. The authority hasn't just lost large sums fighting and losing hopeless legal cases, it needs to ask itself whether it needs to spend over £200, 000 annually on publicity. I'm offering that we Liberal Democrats act as critical friend when it comes to scrutiny. The Council, often tempted towards complacency and self congratulation, would be very much better if it more willingly faced up to the difficult questions that often, only opposition members can ask.

Another way, which doesn't have to increase the cost to council taxpayers, is to move to a system of Local Area Committees. This system has worked well in other areas, such as Eastleigh Borough Council. I sometimes detect an almost arrogant refusal to learn from good practice in other areas, simply because they are of a different political colour.

Surely, the best way of engaging with all the communities we represent would be to hold some meetings, on a regular basis, in different areas of the District. We might find that more people will engage with us, on matters that are local and important to them.

So what of setting the budget for this coming financial year? Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Our key priority must be to maintain services whilst doing all that we possibly can to reduce the burden on the council tax payer.

We think that this time it is possible to deliver no increase in council tax for this year. This is what we should do.

I'm not pretending that this is sustainable, year on year. I don't think either that, alone, it will make a major difference to council tax payers. However, the money that is sitting in council coffers as reserves and balances has all been taken from council taxpayers. Now, more than at any other time, is the time to return it to them.

With the above in mind, I would like all members to consider a budget amendment that I would characterise as being greener, safer and above all fairer for local people.

It's one that delivers help for those that most need it right away, including no increase in council tax and only half the increase in council rent rises that you would otherwise impose.

It makes an important contribution to becoming a greener council. I have already committed my group to working constructively to find smarter ways of working. This doesn't mean just trying to save money, but it means looking at using all resources, more intelligently, trying to reduce our carbon footprint and very importantly, involving others in that task, especially through the idea of local Area Committees.

I'm very sure that providing each individual council member with a community engagement grant budget of £500 will have helped secure improvements in many of the New Forest communities, in ways that would not otherwise have happened. If you look at how the money has been used, you will see examples of all of us being allowed to use our judgement, providing help to organisations that help make our communities safer, fairer and greener. I say, let's go a step further in that direction. It works. It would work more than twice as well if we doubled the budget and each had £1,000 to allocate over a year.

So there we are, a Liberal Democrat budget, that provides a realistic and fully costed alternative. It's one that is fairer, safer and greener. I therefore propose that the budget be amended, as per the wording on the amendment paper I have had distributed to Council members.

Revenue budget and precept 2009/10 Liberal Democrat amendment

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this amendment is to:

- Reduce the council tax increase to zero
- **Improve services to make the New Forest District Greener**, by initiating a serious examination of the benefits of doorstep glass collection
- **Improving services to make New Forest District Safer**, seeking to allocate community safety resources through local area committees
- **Improve services to make the New Forest District Fairer**, devolving decision making powers closer to communities, reducing the burden of council tax and council rent increases and enhancing the ability of individual council members to allocate more funds through community engagement grants

Zero Council Tax

1.2 The amendment proposes to reduce the council tax increase from 3% to zero.

- To give council taxpayers some respite from ever-increasing council tax bills during these harsh economic times.

To deliver a zero increase in council tax, the budget needs to be reduced by £322,000. The Cabinet papers identify that £974,000 is planned to be used from reserves. We would initially increase this by £322,000 next year but would look to reduce the actual call on reserves during the year by seeking even greater savings and efficiencies. Our target areas include press & publicity costs, reported to be £275,000 in the last statement of accounts 2007/08 and deferring all vehicle, equipment and ICT replacement by a year would save £115,000. We would further look at disposing of particular assets, not central to delivery of services, such as works of Art.

Housing Revenue Account

Phasing the rent increase over two years on the basis that RPI in September 2009 will be 0% would require an average increase of approximately 3% in 2009/10 and 3.5% in 2010/11. Current expenditure plans would require that reserves were used to meet the shortfall in 2009/10 of approximately £506,000.

Proposed Amendment

That a General Fund Net Budget requirement of £22,378,000 be agreed after allowing for an initial additional transfer of £322,000 from reserves.

That a Band D Council Tax of £148.70 be agreed. That the HRA budget as set out includes an average increase of 3% on rents for 2009/10 and allows for additional HRA reserves to be used of £506,000.