

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meetings held on 6 July 2009)

1. NORTH SOLENT SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 6)

The Cabinet has agreed a draft Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for public consultation.

The NFDC shoreline is covered by two Shoreline Management Plans. The North Solent SMP covers the NFDC frontage between Hurst Spit and Redbridge, and the Hurst Spit to Durlston Head SMP covers the NFDC frontage between Hurst Spit and Chewton Bunny (the boundary between NFDC and Christchurch Borough Council).

The key purpose of the SMP process is to inform Defra of the potential future flood and coastal defence requirements and the associated potential financial requirements, for the England and Wales shoreline, thus giving an indication of the national picture.

A SMP is a non-statutory document that aims to balance the management of coastal flooding and erosion risks, with natural processes, and the consequences of climate change. It determines technically, economically and environmentally sustainable policies for management of the shoreline over 3 timeframes, the present day (0-20 years); the medium-term (20-50 years) and the long-term (50-100 years).

Due to the current legislative and funding arrangements, climate change and environmental considerations, it may not be possible to protect, or continue to defend, land or property from flooding or erosion. Discrete lengths of coastline, termed policy units, have been defined based on natural sediment movements and coastal processes. The units show the assets and features potentially at risk of flooding and/or erosion within the coastal zone. A single policy has been applied per epoch per policy unit.

The Regional Habitat Creation Programme (RHCP), developed in close consultation with Natural England and Local Authorities, aims to provide a strategic and proactive approach for the provision and delivery of compensatory habitats. Habitat creation programmes are the Government's recommended vehicle for delivering strategic habitat compensation and are funded in advance of engineering works that cause damage.

The Habitat Creation Programme compiles the compensatory habitat creation needs for the Region from the Appropriate Assessments carried out for the different SMPs in the Region. Habitat needs are therefore based on the estimated impacts of approved SMP policies for all frontages, including Local Authority and third party frontages. It is not necessary for the anticipated compensatory habitats to be in place at the time that the SMP is approved, but only when the damage is likely to occur.

The Programme therefore aims to secure sites and develop habitat in a timely manner in advance of damage occurring. The RHCP will be identified within the Appropriate Assessment as the proposed delivery vehicle for compensating for habitat losses, so parties agreeing to the SMP are also agreeing to the method for compensating for its impacts.

Taking this into account the Cabinet has agreed that representations be made to the Environment Agency to request that the compensatory habitat requirements identified in the Appropriate Assessment be secured and delivered through the RHCP.

The public consultation period will run from September to November 2009 and all interested parties are encouraged to engage with the process. The comments and views received will be reported back to the Cabinet in December with a view to the Council then agreeing the final Plan.

2. SLOANE AVENUE CAR PARK, SLOANE AVENUE, HOLBURY (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 7)

The Cabinet has agreed to the disposal of Sloane Avenue Car Park, Holbury for affordable housing.

The site has been declared surplus to the Council's requirements. Although the extent of the site would accommodate a variety of options, it lies within inner Fawley Hazard Zone which seeks to control the type and extent of development. This limits any residential development potential. Various alternative uses have been considered for the site including some other form of community use i.e. place of worship or employment in line with the planning policy. However, following consideration by the Council's Asset Management Group it was recommended that the most appropriate use for this area of land would be disposal for residential use to a partner registered social landlord.

The Cabinet has therefore now agreed to disposal of the land to Atlantic Housing for a scheme of one 2 bed unit and one 3 bed unit. The new affordable housing will be constructed to Environmentally Sustainable Code Level Four standard which will make the properties more cost effective to run. The proposal will also produce a modest capital receipt for the Council.

The Cabinet noted that the parish and district council will continue to explore possibilities for the provision of additional open space/community facilities in the area.

3. PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY- REVIEW OF GRANT POLICY AND INTRODUCTION OF LOANS (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 8)

The Cabinet is pleased to note that the Council has recently been awarded additional funding from the Regional Housing Board as part of a consortium of local authorities involved with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). As a result they have agreed a number of variations to the Council's existing Financial Assistance Policy to utilise some of the monies. They have also agreed a new policy to enable loans to be given to low income private sector households in the district to carry out repairs and improvements.

The revisions to the current policy and the new policy are detailed in Report C to the Cabinet. However, in summary, the changes will provide for:-

- The Minor Works Assistance Grant to be increased from £5,000 to £10,000;

- Home Improvement Loans of up to £30,000 to be offered to low income households to assist with repairs/improvements to meet prescribed housing standards (e.g. Housing Health and Safety Rating System and Decent Home Standard), with the Housing Portfolio Holder now having delegated authority to increase the loan to a maximum of £40,000 in exceptional circumstances;
- Accessible Home Loans of up to £30,000 to be offered to low income households to 'top up' mandatory Disabled Facility Grants (DFG), where the cost of the scheme is in excess of the mandatory DFG limit;
- Accessible Home Loans of up to £5,000 to be offered to low income households to assist disabled homeowners to move to a new home where it is not possible to adapt their existing property, to include removal expenses, legal fees etc but not any increase in value of the new home;
- Landlord Loans of up to £30,000 to help reduce the number of empty homes, and provide additional accommodation over shops, on condition that the property is let to a tenant nominated from the Council's register, and that the loan is repaid via the rental income generated by the end of the agreed letting period (minimum of 5 years);
- Warm Front Top Up Grants to be offered where the Warm Front Grant does not meet the cost of the eligible works;
- Fuel Poverty Grants to be offered to assist low income homeowners who do not meet the Warm Front Grant eligibility criteria but are living in fuel poverty (defined as having to spend more than 10% of their income on keeping warm). The works to be grant aided to be the same as the Warm Front Grant works; and
- Grants of up to £10,000 to be offered, to supplement the Minor Works Assistance Grant budget if necessary. Any grants offered in these circumstances to be subject to the same eligibility criteria and conditions regardless of source of funding.

The new arrangements will enable the Council to help the most vulnerable homeowners in the district to keep their homes safe and remain independent for as long as possible. The money that is given in loans will also eventually come back to the Council to be recycled for new loans in the future.

4. PROPERTY SERVICES – PROPOSED RE-STRUCTURE (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 9)

Subject to the approval of the recommendation below, the Cabinet has agreed proposals and funding for the re-structure of Property Services. The Heads of Service management structure created a new post of Head of Property Services which brought together the property related sections previously managed in a number of different areas of the Council. A new post of Property Manager has been agreed, for which funding will be required.

The new grouping of business units provides a clearer focus to property related activity across the Council. A single centre of expertise will provide future opportunities to work more efficiently, share knowledge and skills and promote consistent standards and working practices. It is expected that the re-structure will lead to further efficiency savings.

RECOMMENDED:

That an expenditure plan bid of £62,500 in 2010/11 be supported to fund a new post of Property Manager.

5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY ACTION PLANS 2008/09 AND 2009/2010 (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 10)

Each year an action plan geared to deliver against the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is developed through the various Community Action Networks (CANs) supporting the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The Cabinet has considered and agreed the performance as reported by the individual Community Action Networks (CANs) against the 2008/09 actions, and the proposals being put forward by the CANs for 2009/10. They are pleased to note that overall performance shows approximately 75% of actions were achieved.

The draft action plan details which Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and projected outcomes the actions are contributing towards. This will be developed further to show where the actions contributed to Local Area Agreement Targets and National Indicators.

The Local Strategic Partnership at their meeting on 3 July 2009 supported the approval of the report.

6. GREEN AUDIT DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLANS (REPORT F) (MINUTE NO. 11)

The Cabinet has approved the final three improvement plans arising from the Green Audit.

The first plan considered the way households are run. It looks at the Council's approach to domestic waste management particularly in terms of reduction, re-use and recycling of material. It also contains proposals to promote home energy conservation.

The second plan considered the way the Council works with businesses and the way in which communities are run. This theme looks at the issue of commercial waste management and energy management.

The final plan looks at the way in which communities are run and focuses on traffic management and street scene issues.

The approval and implementation of all plans coming out of the Green Audit should make important contributions towards the environment, in particular reducing the Council's and the District's carbon footprint and making best use of non renewable natural resources.

The Green Audit has now reached its conclusion in the review and improvement planning stages. Implementation, monitoring and reporting will be key stages in the future to ensure the plans deliver real benefits. The Environment Portfolio Holder will work with the Environment Review Panel and officers to make sure the Council does not lose the impetus created by the good work carried out as part of the Green Audit.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2008/09 ANNUAL REPORT (REPORT G) (MINUTE NO. 12)

The Cabinet has noted the annual treasury report which is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures and covers the treasury activity for 2008/09. The Cabinet has also noted the actual Prudential Indicators for 2008/09 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Whilst members note the negative impact on the Council's income of the reduction in interest rates, they are pleased that the Council continues to be debt free and is forecast to remain so.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008 – 2012 (REPORT H) (MINUTE NO. 13)

The Cabinet has considered and agreed a number of proposals in relation to the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that sets out the broad financial framework that the Council will operate within during the forthcoming years, in support of the Corporate Plan approved in 2008.

The actions taken by the Council to deliver an annual balanced budget in both 2008/09 and 2009/10 have been achieved despite the extremely volatile financial climate experienced. The savings achieved have been made in a manner which has endeavoured to maintain performance and priority services provided to the community. The Medium Term Financial Plan projections for 2010/11 & 2011/12 identify the need to develop a plan for delivering approximately £4 million of annual savings over the plan period. The report indicates that a good start has been made in delivering an Efficiency and Savings programme.

Over the next few years there remains considerable financial uncertainty with the likelihood of actual reductions in grant levels and ongoing work is needed to ensure that the Savings and Efficiency Plan is delivered.

9. PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE (PUSH) BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2009 (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO. 14)

PUSH is required to produce a Business Plan each year to set out its proposed actions and priorities. This must be individually approved by the eleven Local Authority partners, to provide the mandate for the Joint Committee to take the necessary decisions and actions to implement the Business Plan.

The Business Plan, which is available to view on ForestNet and the Council's website, follows the same broad style as the existing Plan with separate chapters on the four main PUSH themes, a section on Financing the Strategy, which also covers the work of the new External Funding and Resources Theme, and a Transport Chapter summarising the priorities and overall approach of the Transport for South Hampshire Joint Committee, which leads on sub-regional transport matters in South Hampshire, working alongside PUSH.

With the new Delivery Panel structure now agreed, and theme leads identified at both Member and Chief Executive level, it is expected that the Business Plan will become a more useful working document and a framework for the activity of each theme.

In the light of the economic climate, the Plan will evolve and in 2010 the Housing and Economic Growth targets will need to be re-considered.

RECOMMENDED:

That the PUSH Business Plan 2009-11, as a basis for the operations of the PUSH Joint Committee, be agreed.

**10. SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS OF POWERS TO OFFICERS (REPORT J)
(MINUTE NO. 15)**

The Council operates an extensive scheme of delegation of powers to officers that allows the authority to act promptly and effectively. The Cabinet has agreed a number of updates to the Scheme of Delegations of Powers to Officers, as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report J to them, to reflect changes in establishment and working practices.

**Cllr B Rickman
CHAIRMAN**

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