

24 OCTOBER 2011

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 24 October 2011

- p Cllr J Penwarden – Chairman
- p Cllr Mrs A E McEvoy – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p A R Alvey
- p Mrs D E Andrews
- p G C Beck
- ap Ms R Bellows
- p Mrs S M Bennison
- p J E Binns
- p D A Britton
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p S J Clarke
- p Mrs J L Cleary
- ap G F Dart
- ap S P Davies
- p W H Dow
- p Ms L C Ford
- p A T Glass
- p M R Harris
- p C J Harrison
- ap D Harrison
- p E J Heron
- p J D Heron
- p Miss A J Hickman
- p Mrs A J Hoare
- p Mrs M D Holding
- p Mrs P Jackman
- p M J Kendal
- p A N G Kilgour
- p C Lagdon
- p Mrs M E Lewis
- p Mrs P J Lovelace

Councillors:

- p B D Lucas
- p Mrs M McLean
- p A D O'Sullivan
- p Sqn Ldr B M F Pemberton
- p N S Penman
- p L R Puttock
- 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
- p Miss A Sevier
- p M D Southgate
- ap A J Swain
- p M H Thierry
- p A R Tinsley
- p D B Tipp
- p F P Vickers
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p R A Wappet
- p Mrs C V Ward
- p J G Ward
- p C A Wise
- p Mrs B M Woodfield
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascal, Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens.

22. MINUTES (REPORT A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs M S Wade and S S Wade declared interests in Minute 26.

24. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman's engagements had, and would continue to be, set out in the monthly information bulletin.

The Chairman would be hosting a fundraising dinner on 25 October at 7.00pm at the Conservative Club in New Milton. The Chairman thanked all of those who had purchased tickets.

The Chairman would attend the Remembrance Day services on Sunday 13 November in Burley, Keyhaven and Milford on Sea where he would lay wreaths on behalf of the people of New Forest District. The Chairman encouraged members to attend remembrance services in their local areas.

25. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There were none.

26. REPORT OF CABINET.

Cllrs M S Wade and S S Wade declared personal and prejudicial interests in item 1 of the report of Cabinet dated 7 September 2011 as a family member worked for the tourism service. They left the meeting during consideration of this item.

The Chairman had agreed with the Leader of the Council that in respect of item 7 (Notice of Motion – Reduction in Carbon Emissions) Cllr Tipp would move the motion set out in the report.

The Leader of the Council, as Chairman of the Cabinet, presented items 1 – 6 and 8 of the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 7 September and 5 October 2011.

Item 5 – Review of Private Sector Financial Assistance Policy

A member asked whether the position of mobile home owners had been considered. Mobile homes often carried little equity and this might mean that when homes were sold, owners might not have sufficient capital to repay any loans made under the policy. The Leader of the Council said that he would look into this matter again.

Item 7 - Notice of Motion – Reduction in Carbon Emissions

Cllr Tipp moved the following motion: -

“It is widely known that energy bills have been rising at rates well above inflation in the past few years and that this is already adversely affecting businesses and causing financial hardship to many people throughout the country on low incomes, including residents of this District.

In light of this I propose that the Council should write to the Government, urging it not to make commitments to reduce carbon dioxide emissions

further or faster than other major industrial nations without a world-wide binding commitment by all those other industrial nations, as such a unilateral commitment would add further increases to UK energy prices causing increasing hardship.”

Cllr Tipp made a statement on the motion attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

In seconding the motion, Cllr Glass said that the Government should avoid placing additional financial burdens on businesses and households during this time of financial hardship. He also said that Britain’s targets were too high when compared with other countries and this would mean that Britain’s businesses would be placed at a disadvantage.

Other members spoke in support of the motion and said that as Britain only emitted 2% of the world’s green house gas emissions, reducing this further would have no impact when other developing countries such as China, were increasing emissions at a rapid rate. In this time of austerity, Britain should consider the welfare of its own people as a matter of priority and ensure that those vulnerable members of society were able to afford heating and other basic necessities of life.

In speaking against the motion, some members said that the Council should show leadership on climate change issues and that the Council should support the Government in their pledge to be the greenest government ever. Leaders of over 200 countries had argued that there should be more targeted climate change policies and that these would bring investment and financial rewards. Business leaders had argued for action and this would benefit economies and societies across the world. In relation to high energy bills, these could be reduced by Government regulation and competition between energy producers.

Cllr Tipp, in closing the debate, said that despite the fact that Britain had taken leadership on this issue, other nations were not following this lead and as a result the country had put itself at an economic disadvantage. He also went on to say that new technologies such as electric vehicles needed to improve vastly before they could be relied upon to reduce emission levels.

Upon a vote, the motion proposed by Cllr Tipp was agreed.

Item 8 – Setting of Fees for Parking Clocks and Car Park Meter Charges as from 1 January 2012

In response to a question with regard to whether the cost burden to New Forest citizens of increasing fees had been considered, the Leader of the Council said that thorough consultation had been undertaken on this matter. From the correspondence received on the proposals most people agreed that the changes represented a fair deal for the district. He also said that no other local authority had sought to support residents and businesses in the same way.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received; and
- (b) That in relation to Item 7 – Notice of Motion, Reduction in Carbon Dioxide Emissions the following motion be agreed: -

“It is widely known that energy bills have been rising at rates well above inflation in the past few years and that this is already

adversely affecting businesses and causing financial hardship to many people throughout the country on low incomes, including residents of this District.

In light of this I propose that the Council should write to the Government, urging it not to make commitments to reduce carbon dioxide emissions further or faster than other major industrial nations without a world-wide binding commitment by all those other industrial nations, as such a unilateral commitment would add further increases to UK energy prices causing increasing hardship.”

27. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

28. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' QUESTIONS.

There were none.

29. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

No changes to committees and panels were proposed by the political groups.

CHAIRMAN

It is widely known that energy bills have been rising at rates well above inflation in the past few years and that this is already adversely affecting businesses and causing financial hardship to many people throughout the country on low incomes, including residents of this District.

In light of this I propose that the Council should write to the government, urging it not to make commitments to reduce carbon dioxide emissions further or faster than other major industrial nations without a world-wide binding commitment by all those other industrial nations, as such a unilateral commitment would add further increases to UK energy prices causing increasing hardship.”

I am delighted to have the opportunity of debating this motion today. I want to thank the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel for looking closely at it and for their strong vote of support for it.

Our current policy on emissions is one of unilateral targets that go faster and further than any other nation. Since the UK only emits 2% of the world's ghg emissions, our action, by itself, will achieve no practical difference to world-wide levels at all; meanwhile our industry is put at a significant disadvantage to our foreign competition. Nearly 1 in 4 families in the UK are struggling to pay their energy bills. The government's figure for the cost of implementing the Climate Change Act was a staggering £405 billion. What is the cost of this in jobs and increased poverty in the UK?

This motion is not about whether or not the globe is warming significantly, or at all; it's not about whether or not CO2 is causing warming. These are debates for another day. This motion is about what would be an effective response in order to reduce emissions of CO2. While we stick rigidly to our 5 year plans, our competitors in China are building a new coal-fired power station every week, and have plans for 100 new airports. A recent report states that China has already passed France and Spain in emissions per person and will pass the UK by next year. They will emit more CO2 per person than the USA by 2017.

Only a world-wide agreement will lower CO2 emissions. Just as with nuclear weapons, unilateral action is simply a pointless gesture. All pain and no gain!

The EU has, in the past, been a leading voice for action to save the planet; but earlier this year when the EU Parliament voted on a proposal to increase its target from 20% cuts by 2020 to 30% they voted against it. The majority vote included our own Conservative MEPs.

Chancellor, George Osborne recently said, “We're not going to save the planet by putting our country out of business, so let's at the very least resolve that we're going to cut our carbon emissions no slower, but also no faster than our fellow countries in Europe.”

Back in October 2008, when the Climate Change Bill passed its third reading, no one could have foreseen how serious the financial situation would become. In 2007 and 8 all our political parties were vying with one another to show who had the greenest credentials. This led to the Bill being passed with only 5 votes against. In fact the Labour Minister, Ed Miliband, announced during the debate that the original target of 60% CO2 reduction by 2050 was to be increased to 80%. No analysis of this extra cost was even considered before the vote was taken.

The UK is committed to cuts of 34% by 2020, 50% by 2025, and 80% by 2050. By 2020 33% of our electricity bill will be caused by climate change policies according to the DECC figures. Even now in 2011 our industry is facing severe problems with increased energy costs on top of the very serious economic situation.

In order to achieve its huge wind turbine building programme, the government is having to provide massive subsidies to rich landowners such as Sir Reginald Sheffield, the father-in-law of the PM, who is making a total of £350,000 per year for eight turbines, and hopes to make another £200,000 a year for six more. These subsidies are being paid by you and I and the millions in fuel poverty, as well as hard-pressed industries struggling for survival.

These turbines will produce a small amount of intermittent and very expensive electricity – at least 4 times as expensive as gas generation; and the more we build, the more gas plants we need to build as back-up for days when the wind isn't blowing, driving costs even higher.

The question we have to answer is – what is more important, people's jobs and affordable energy bills; or slavishly following the government's arbitrary emission targets.

This debate is a unique opportunity to have our say as a collective body. Please vote for common sense and support this motion today.