

22 OCTOBER 2012

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 22 October 2012.

- p Cllr Mrs A E McEvoy – Chairman
- p Cllr Ms L C Ford – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p A R Alvey
- p Mrs D E Andrews
- p G C Beck
- p Mrs S V Beeton
- p Ms R Bellows
- ap Mrs S M Bennison
- J E Binns
- p D A Britton
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- p S J Clarke
- p Mrs J L Cleary
- p G F Dart
- p S P Davies
- p W H Dow
- p A T Glass
- p M R Harris
- p C J Harrison
- p D Harrison
- p E J Heron
- p J D Heron
- ap Miss A J Hickman
- 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
- ap Mrs P J Lovelace

Councillors:

- p B D Lucas
- p Mrs M McLean
- p A D O'Sullivan
- ap N S Penman
- p J Penwarden
- 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
- ap 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
- ap Mrs B M Woodfield
- p P R Woods
- ap Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

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

38. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2012 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

All members declared an interest in Minute 42.

40. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Proms Spectacular

The Chairman announced that despite the bad weather and a forced change of venue, the Proms Spectacular event held on 23 September 2012 had raised £425.50 for her two chosen charities.

The Chairman thanked Mr Nash, Clerk of Fawley Parish Council for his help in the organisation of the event, Alex Pope and his Performance Showcase Group and the Hampshire Caledonian Pipe Band for contributing to the evening.

Remembrance Day – Sunday 11 November 2012

New Forest District Council would be represented at a number of Remembrance Sunday services. The Chairman would attend the service at All Saints' Church, Fawley and would lay a wreath. The Deputy Chairman, Cllr Mrs Ford, would do likewise at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Ringwood.

Civic Service – Sunday 25 November 2012

The Chairman announced that the Civic Service would be held on Sunday 25 November at All Saints' Church, Fawley at 2.00 pm. All Councillors were welcome to attend.

41. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Council had hosted the VisitEngland's national tourism conference where the Council had launched the Brand New Forest Twizy Electric Vehicle and ChargePoint Project to delegates.

The New Forest had come third, just a point behind the Lake District and Cornwall, as England's Best Destination in 2012. The VisitEngland Survey demonstrated that the Council's work to support tourism, in partnership with the New Forest Tourism Association (NFTA), had worked well.

It also showed that the partnership model was still fit for purpose after nearly 25 years whilst many other models had come and gone. Good examples of the NFDC/NFTA partnership's continued innovation could be seen in the success of the Business Conference Showcase and the continued development of the Brand New Forest campaign to embed tourism into the wider local economy.

The Council's support for the economy through the Brand New Forest campaign had meant a continued focus on providing jobs and particularly apprenticeships for young people. The previous week the Council had been a main sponsor of the Solent Jobs Fayre and Skills Festival which attracted nearly 2,000 unemployed adults and over 2,000 young people from the New Forest.

The Brand New Forest Doing Better Business Local Programme continued apace to improve the profile of, and opportunities in, the engineering and marine sectors.

Over the coming months the Council would also develop activities to help support the local care industry.

The colourful two-seater Renault Twizy electric vehicle had been on display for members in the Council's car park. A fleet of Twizys, supplied by New Forest Environmental and sponsored by Brand New Forest, would soon be available for public hire next to Brockenhurst Station, as well as being part of the guest experience at a number of local hotels over the coming months.

Each hire would include a Brand New Forest Card for the day, which would support nearly 100 local businesses, shops, restaurants and visitor attractions. The Twizy had a 50 mile range and could be recharged for free at participating businesses, if the Brand New Forest Card offer had been taken up.

The launch of the Brand New Forest Twizy Scheme and all the other business developments in the New Forest would help keep the Council among the UK's leading tourism innovators.

42. REPORT OF CABINET.

All members declared an interest in item 2 of the report – Amendment of Members' Allowances Scheme, but under common law they were not precluded from participating in discussion or voting.

Cllr Rickman, the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the Cabinet held on 3 October 2012.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations adopted.

43. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

44. QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A.

Question from: Cllr Mrs Beeton to Cllr B Rickman, Leader of the Council

"Does this Council acknowledge and support the Localism Act 2011"

Answer:

The Leader of the Council replied that the Council did support the Act. The Council had responded positively to the opportunities it afforded. The introduction of the Act had led to the Council adopting a number of new policies.

Cllr Mrs Beeton was pleased to hear the Leader's remarks particularly in the light of the Act's provisions in relation to developments in communities such as Milford.

Question from: Cllr Mrs M Robinson to Cllr Mrs Cleary, Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder

"Is it true that the housing waiting list of approximately 6000 families is to be reduced by around 1000 to 5000? Is this because you have found another 1000 homes in the district?"

Answer:

The Portfolio Holder replied that a report to the Cabinet in November would outline the proposed new Homeseach Allocations Scheme. Provisions in the Localism Act gave local authorities greater control over which applicants could join housing waiting lists. Previously, the Council had been obligated to operate an open waiting list so that applicants without a local connection to the district or without any housing need would have to be accepted onto the list. The result of the changes would be that those applicants who had no reasonable chance of being housed as they did not have a local connection or any recognised need for housing, would no longer be entitled to join the housing waiting list. It was anticipated that this would reduce the numbers on the list from 5,500 households to approximately 4,000.

As a supplementary question, Cllr Mrs Robinson expressed the view that the 'bedroom' tax had given rise to more applications for smaller properties, and asked if the Council had undertaken any research into the number of applicants for smaller homes and whether the Council would have enough properties to meet this demand.

The Portfolio Holder undertook to respond to Cllr Mrs Robinson on this point but doubted whether the Council would ever have sufficient housing for those needing homes.

Question from: Cllr C Harrison to Cllr B Rickman, the Leader of the Council

Cllr C Harrison asked whether the Leader condoned the fact that some members had not yet completed and returned their Register of Interest forms within the 28 day period prescribed by law, which he understood was a criminal offence. The Leader of the Council said that he did not excuse criminal activity but he was unclear about the background to the question. It might be that personal circumstances were involved. The Leader of the Council undertook to discuss the matter with Cllr C Harrison.

45. NOTICE OF MOTION.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine moved the following motion standing in his name: -

That as New Forest District Council has previously expressed concern to the Highways Agency at the safety record of traffic using the A31 and the number of vehicle accidents in the vicinity of Ringwood, it is now pleased to offer its formal support to the following resolution by Ringwood Town Council:

"That Ringwood Town Council, having deep concerns related to the number of vehicle accidents in the urban stretch of the A31 in Hampshire from Picket Post to the Ashley Heath interchange, and having regard to public opinion, petitions the Highways Agency to once again review, in consultation with this (*Ringwood Town*) Council, measures which, if implemented, would have a beneficial impact on the accident rate on that section of the A31."

The motion was seconded.

The Chairman allowed discussion on this item under Standing Order 41.2.

Cllr Rippon-Swaine said that safety of users of the A31 was of great concern to the Town Council. He expressed the view that not only was the speed limit on the road inappropriate, but that the design of the road had become inadequate for modern day usage having been designed over 60 years ago. Improvements such as a reduction in the speed limit and redesign of the road were needed in order to reduce the accident rate. The Town Council had the support of all five District Councillors as well as Desmond Swayne, MP for New Forest West, on this matter. Cllr Rippon-Swaine asked members to support the motion.

A number of members spoke in support of the motion.

It was noted that the Council had lobbied the Highways Agency with concerns regarding the A31 and suggested measures to improve safety including the introduction of a 50 mph speed limit. Members expressed their disappointment in the Highways Agency's response to these concerns, as well as the lack of support from the Police, particularly as the accident rate had increased over recent years.

Members expressed the view that the A31 was an extremely important part of the road network of the New Forest and as such it was vital that it was safe for users. Many accidents were linked to vehicles running into the rear of stationary or slow moving traffic caused by congestion. If congestion problems on the road were addressed then fewer accidents would result. Likewise, if delays on the A31 were reduced, drivers would not use unsuitable minor roads in the Forest. Cllr D Harrison, lead member for transport for the NPA, supported the motion. He confirmed that the NPA would join the Council and Town Council in lobbying the Highways Agency on this matter.

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder said that previous discussions held with the Highways Agency had been unhelpful, with suggestions for the redesign of the road and a reduction in the speed limit disregarded. The Portfolio Holder would shortly be writing to neighbouring authorities to seek their support in lobbying the Highways Agency to address the problems on the A31.

Other members agreed that the design of the road was unfit for purpose. The current 70mph speed limit was wholly unsuitable for the road. The Highways Agency had neglected the signage on the road. Many signs were now redundant and out of date. All of these issues had meant that the A31 had become dangerous. There were frequent accidents, sometimes fatal.

In closing the debate, Cllr Rippon-Swaine said that he was delighted with the level of support from members and hoped that the collective support from the Town Council, District Council and neighbouring authorities would put pressure on the Highways Agency to address the safety issues on the A31.

RESOLVED:

That the Council offers its formal support to the following resolution by Ringwood Town Council: -

“That Ringwood Town Council, having deep concerns related to the number of vehicle accidents in the urban stretch of the A31 in Hampshire from Picket Post to the Ashley Heath interchange, and having regard to public opinion, petitions the Highways Agency to once again review, in consultation with this (*Ringwood Town*) Council, measures which, if implemented, would have a beneficial impact on the accident rate on that section of the A31.”

46. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

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

CHAIRMAN

(CL221012)