

25 FEBRUARY 2013

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 25 February 2013.

- 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
- 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
- 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
- p Miss A J Hickman
- p Mrs A J Hoare
- ap Mrs M D Holding
- p Mrs P Jackman
- p M J Kendal
- ap A N G Kilgour
- ap 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 N S Penman
- p J Penwarden
- p L R Puttock
- p A W Rice
- p B Rickman
- ap W S Rippon-Swaine
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- ap Mrs A M Rostand
- p D J Russell
- ap R F Scrivens
- p Miss A Sevier
- ap M D Southgate
- p A J Swain
- p M H Thierry
- p A R Tinsley
- p D B Tipp
- ap 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
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

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

61. MINUTES (PAPER A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs Ms Bellows and Mrs McLean disclosed interests in Minute 65 (Report of Cabinet dated 6 February, Item 3).

All members of the Council had been granted dispensations to speak and to vote on Minute No.68 the 2013/14 Council Tax.

Cllrs M S Wade, S S Wade and Mrs Wyeth disclosed interests in Minute 69 – Pay Policy Statement.

63. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman thanked Councillors who had attended her charity Burns Night Supper on 25 January at Lyndhurst Park Hotel. The event had raised a total of £3,911.62 which would go towards the Chairman's two chosen charities. The Chairman was delighted with the result and thanked Donna Langfield for her hard work in helping to organise the event.

Members would be setting the Council's budget for 2013/14 at the meeting. The Chairman reported that she intended to ask the Council to agree to suspend Standing Order 47.6 to allow the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to exceed the time limit of five minutes on their speeches under Item 4 of the report of the Cabinet.

64. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There were none.

65. REPORTS OF COMMITTEE AND CABINET.

Report of Audit Committee

Cllr O'Sullivan, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the report of the meeting held on 8 February 2013.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations adopted.

Report of Cabinet

Cllrs Ms Bellows and Mrs McLean disclosed interests in item 3 of the Cabinet report (Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Expenditure Programme) on the grounds that they were Council tenants. They concluded that there were issues under common law which prevented them from speaking and voting, and took no part in the discussion or voting.

The Leader of the Council, as Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the meeting held on 6 February 2013.

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

Item 3 – Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Expenditure Programme

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities hoped that 35 properties would be purchased in 2013/14 under the acquisitions programme. However the number would be dependent on a number of factors including location, availability and purchase price.

Cllr M Wade expressed concern at the position of low income families in the district. Tenants from his ward had voiced fears over their ability to pay household bills in light of changes to council tax benefit, new benefit caps and the 'bedroom tax'. He therefore felt that an increase in council rents would place additional financial pressure on tenants.

He proposed that recommendation (b) be amended to provide that there be no rent increase in April this year. He felt that delaying a rent increase for 12 months would give the Council time to review the impact on tenants of the reduction in benefits. He considered that the Council had a moral obligation to assist tenants struggling financially and to support them in affording basic living costs.

The amendment was seconded.

The Deputy Leader of the Council said that whilst he accepted that reductions in benefits would cause some tenants difficulties, the Council's tenant representatives had supported the rent increase at the Cabinet meeting. Tenant Representatives understood that money gained from rent rises would enable the Council to invest in new and to improve its existing housing stock which would be of benefit to all tenants.

Members spoke for and against the amendment.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that the level of rent set by this Council was already low in comparison with the private sector. He felt that it was more important that the Council did not raise council tax, as this would benefit all residents in the New Forest.

Cllr M Wade concluded that his amendment was responding to the request of some tenants, who were experiencing financial difficulties, and the Council should not add to their burden by increasing rents.

In closing the debate, the Leader of the Council said that raising rents would allow the Council to build new homes and improve the Council's existing housing stock which would benefit those in need of affordable housing.

Upon a vote, the amendment proposed by Cllr M Wade was lost.

Upon a vote, the Cabinet's recommendations were carried.

Item 4 – The Medium Term Financial Plan – Annual Budget 2013/14

The Chairman moved that Standing Order 47.6 be suspended to allow the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to exceed the time limit for making their speeches. The motion was seconded and carried.

The Leader of the Council made a statement on the Administration's proposed budget attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder seconded the recommendation.

The Leader of the Opposition then made a statement (attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes) and moved the following additional recommendations: -

- (a) That this Council forms a task and finish group to:
 - (i) Investigate the need for a night shelter or similar in New Forest District Council's area, with particular emphasis on the plight of males over 24 years of age;
 - (ii) Examine the various ways this could be achieved with the co-operation of other bodies; and
 - (iii) Investigate the release of funds from the 'No Second Night Out' budget.
- (b) That this Council forms a task and finish group to investigate decreasing expenditure by reducing the number of Councillors on New Forest District Council.

Cllr M S Wade seconded the amendments.

Members discussed the Cabinet's budget proposals together with the amendments.

Cllr Mrs Robinson understood and accepted the need for an austerity budget and hoped that the financial climate would improve for the benefit of those less fortunate. She did however express concern regarding what she considered to be the lack of transparency in the preparation of the budget recommended by the Cabinet. While she understood that the Council's process had been disrupted by the lateness of regulations and information from the Government, she was concerned that there had been little scrutiny of the budget proposals. She hoped that there would be a return to scrutiny of individual Portfolio Holder plans in future.

The Deputy Leader of the Council agreed that the budget timings had not been ideal and it was unfortunate that it had not been possible to carry out the same scrutiny process as in previous years. However, many of the savings in the budget were a continuation of what had been planned and discussed last year. In the constrained time available, the Cabinet had done its best to involve members.

The Leader of the Council supported the Leader of the Opposition's proposals.

Upon a vote, the Leader of the Opposition's proposals were carried.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations be adopted, subject to the inclusion of the following under Item 4 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Annual Budget 2013/14:

- (g) That this Council forms a task and finish group to:
 - (i) Investigate the need for a night shelter or similar in New Forest District Council's area, with particular emphasis on the plight of males over 24 years of age;
 - (ii) Examine the various ways this could be achieved with the co-operation of other bodies; and
 - (iii) Investigate the release of funds from the 'No Second Night Out' budget.
- (h) That this Council forms a task and finish group to investigate decreasing expenditure by reducing the number of Councillors on New Forest District Council.

66. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

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

There were none.

68. THE 2013/14 COUNCIL TAX (REPORT B).

All members of the Council had been granted dispensations to speak and to vote on this matter.

The Council considered the Council Tax for 2013/14.

Cllr Beck, as Chairman of the New Forest Association of Local Councils, thanked officers and especially Bob Jackson, Glynne Miles and Kevin Green who had attended Association meetings and spent some time explaining complex council tax changes to town and parish councils.

The resolutions below include a late request from Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council to reduce, slightly, their precept requirement.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That it be noted that on 28 January 2013 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for the year 2013/14:
 - (a) for the whole Council area as 67,702.70 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as in the attached Appendix 3.

2. To calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2013/14 (excluding Parish Precepts) is £10,545,370.
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2013/14 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011: -
 - (a) **£115,330,933** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
 - (b) **£100,352,470** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) **£14,978,463** being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B(1) of the Act).
 - (d) **£221.24** being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by the Council Tax Base, Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) **£4,433,093** being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - (f) **£155.76** being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (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 specifically for the District Council. There are no non-parished areas.

(g)

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	183.49
BEAULIEU	170.86
BOLDRE	174.23
BRAMSHAW	172.31
BRANSGORE	200.07
BREAMORE	177.58
BROCKENHURST	187.41
BURLEY	172.76
COPYTHORNE	168.16
DAMERHAM	188.88
DENNY LODGE	186.91
EAST BOLDRE	193.14
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	187.47
EXBURY & LEPE	195.55
FAWLEY	251.67
FORDINGBRIDGE	239.90
GODSHILL	201.92
HALE	187.39
HORDLE	194.74
HYDE	169.34
HYTHE & DIBDEN	230.61
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	248.88
LYNDHURST	202.06
MARCHWOOD	254.33
MARTIN	182.12
MILFORD-ON-SEA	189.28
MINSTEAD	181.44
NETLEY MARSH	169.76
NEW MILTON	204.06
RINGWOOD	228.97
ROCKBOURNE	229.52
SANDLEHEATH	174.20
SOPLEY	222.15
SWAY	184.36
TOTTON & ELING	263.25
WHITSBURY	177.05
WOODGREEN	181.64

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3(f) 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 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.

(h) These are the District plus Town/Parish Council elements only. See below and page 10 for the full amounts of Council Tax.

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	122.33	142.71	163.11	183.49	224.27	265.04	305.82	366.98
BEAULIEU	113.91	132.89	151.88	170.86	208.83	246.80	284.77	341.72
BOLDRE	116.16	135.51	154.88	174.23	212.95	251.67	290.39	348.46
BRAMSHAW	114.88	134.02	153.17	172.31	210.60	248.89	287.19	344.62
BRANSGORE	133.38	155.61	177.84	200.07	244.53	288.99	333.45	400.14
BREAMORE	118.39	138.12	157.85	177.58	217.04	256.51	295.97	355.16
BROCKENHURST	124.94	145.76	166.59	187.41	229.06	270.71	312.35	374.82
BURLEY	115.18	134.37	153.57	172.76	211.15	249.54	287.94	345.52
COPYTHORNE	112.11	130.79	149.48	168.16	205.53	242.90	280.27	336.32
DAMERHAM	125.92	146.91	167.90	188.88	230.85	272.83	314.80	377.76
DENNY LODGE	124.61	145.37	166.15	186.91	228.45	269.98	311.52	373.82
EAST BOLDRE	128.76	150.22	171.68	193.14	236.06	278.98	321.90	386.28
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLE	124.98	145.81	166.64	187.47	229.13	270.79	312.45	374.94
EXBURY & LEPE	130.37	152.09	173.83	195.55	239.01	282.46	325.92	391.10
FAWLEY	167.78	195.74	223.71	251.67	307.60	363.53	419.45	503.34
FORDINGBRIDGE	159.94	186.59	213.25	239.90	293.21	346.52	399.84	479.80
GODSHILL	134.62	157.05	179.49	201.92	246.79	291.66	336.54	403.84
HALE	124.93	145.75	166.57	187.39	229.03	270.68	312.32	374.78
HORDLE	129.83	151.46	173.11	194.74	238.02	281.29	324.57	389.48
HYDE	112.90	131.71	150.53	169.34	206.97	244.60	282.24	338.68
HYPHE & DIBDEN	153.74	179.36	204.99	230.61	281.86	333.11	384.35	461.22
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	165.92	193.57	221.23	248.88	304.19	359.50	414.80	497.76
LYNDHURST	134.71	157.16	179.61	202.06	246.96	291.87	336.77	404.12
MARCHWOOD	169.56	197.81	226.08	254.33	310.85	367.37	423.89	508.66
MARTIN	121.42	141.65	161.89	182.12	222.59	263.06	303.54	364.24
MILFORD-ON-SEA	126.19	147.22	168.25	189.28	231.34	273.41	315.47	378.56
MINSTEAD	120.96	141.12	161.28	181.44	221.76	262.08	302.40	362.88
NETLEY MARSH	113.18	132.03	150.90	169.76	207.49	245.21	282.94	339.52
NEW MILTON	136.04	158.71	181.39	204.06	249.41	294.76	340.10	408.12
RINGWOOD	152.65	178.09	203.53	228.97	279.85	330.74	381.62	457.94
ROCKBOURNE	153.02	178.51	204.02	229.52	280.53	331.53	382.54	459.04
SANDLEHEATH	116.14	135.49	154.85	174.20	212.91	251.62	290.34	348.40
SOPLEY	148.10	172.78	197.47	222.15	271.52	320.89	370.25	444.30
SWAY	122.91	143.39	163.88	184.36	225.33	266.30	307.27	368.72
TOTTON & ELING	175.50	204.75	234.00	263.25	321.75	380.25	438.75	526.50
WHITSBURY	118.04	137.70	157.38	177.05	216.40	255.74	295.09	354.10
WOODGREEN	121.10	141.27	161.46	181.64	222.01	262.37	302.74	363.28

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) 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.

4. That it be noted that Hampshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority have issued precepts for 2013/14 to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in below:

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	691.92	807.24	922.56	1,037.88	1,268.52	1,499.16	1,729.80	2,075.76
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR HAMPSHIRE AUTHORITY	100.83	117.64	134.44	151.25	184.86	218.47	252.08	302.50
HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY	40.92	47.74	54.56	61.38	75.02	88.66	102.30	122.76
	833.67	972.62	1,111.56	1,250.51	1,528.40	1,806.29	2,084.18	2,501.02

5. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2013/14 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown on the next page:-

LOCAL COUNCIL AREA	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
ASHURST & COLBURY	956.00	1,115.33	1,274.67	1,434.00	1,752.67	2,071.33	2,390.00	2,868.00
BEAULIEU	947.58	1,105.51	1,263.44	1,421.37	1,737.23	2,053.09	2,368.95	2,842.74
BOLDRE	949.83	1,108.13	1,266.44	1,424.74	1,741.35	2,057.96	2,374.57	2,849.48
BRAMSHAW	948.55	1,106.64	1,264.73	1,422.82	1,739.00	2,055.18	2,371.37	2,845.64
BRANSGORE	967.05	1,128.23	1,289.40	1,450.58	1,772.93	2,095.28	2,417.63	2,901.16
BREAMORE	952.06	1,110.74	1,269.41	1,428.09	1,745.44	2,062.80	2,380.15	2,856.18
BROCKENHURST	958.61	1,118.38	1,278.15	1,437.92	1,757.46	2,077.00	2,396.53	2,875.84
BURLEY	948.85	1,106.99	1,265.13	1,423.27	1,739.55	2,055.83	2,372.12	2,846.54
COPYTHORNE	945.78	1,103.41	1,261.04	1,418.67	1,733.93	2,049.19	2,364.45	2,837.34
DAMERHAM	959.59	1,119.53	1,279.46	1,439.39	1,759.25	2,079.12	2,398.98	2,878.78
DENNY LODGE	958.28	1,117.99	1,277.71	1,437.42	1,756.85	2,076.27	2,395.70	2,874.84
EAST BOLDRE	962.43	1,122.84	1,283.24	1,443.65	1,764.46	2,085.27	2,406.08	2,887.30
ELLINGHAM HARBRIDGE & IBSLEY	958.65	1,118.43	1,278.20	1,437.98	1,757.53	2,077.08	2,396.63	2,875.96
EXBURY & LEPE	964.04	1,124.71	1,285.39	1,446.06	1,767.41	2,088.75	2,410.10	2,892.12
FAWLEY	1,001.45	1,168.36	1,335.27	1,502.18	1,836.00	2,169.82	2,503.63	3,004.36
FORDINGBRIDGE	993.61	1,159.21	1,324.81	1,490.41	1,821.61	2,152.81	2,484.02	2,980.82
GODSHILL	968.29	1,129.67	1,291.05	1,452.43	1,775.19	2,097.95	2,420.72	2,904.86
HALE	958.60	1,118.37	1,278.13	1,437.90	1,757.43	2,076.97	2,396.50	2,875.80
HORDLE	963.50	1,124.08	1,284.67	1,445.25	1,766.42	2,087.58	2,408.75	2,890.50
HYDE	946.57	1,104.33	1,262.09	1,419.85	1,735.37	2,050.89	2,366.42	2,839.70
HYPHE & DIBDEN	987.41	1,151.98	1,316.55	1,481.12	1,810.26	2,139.40	2,468.53	2,962.24
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON	999.59	1,166.19	1,332.79	1,499.39	1,832.59	2,165.79	2,498.98	2,998.78
LYNDHURST	968.38	1,129.78	1,291.17	1,452.57	1,775.36	2,098.16	2,420.95	2,905.14
MARCHWOOD	1,003.23	1,170.43	1,337.64	1,504.84	1,839.25	2,173.66	2,508.07	3,009.68
MARTIN	955.09	1,114.27	1,273.45	1,432.63	1,750.99	2,069.35	2,387.72	2,865.26
MILFORD-ON-SEA	959.86	1,119.84	1,279.81	1,439.79	1,759.74	2,079.70	2,399.65	2,879.58
MINSTEAD	954.63	1,113.74	1,272.84	1,431.95	1,750.16	2,068.37	2,386.58	2,863.90
NETLEY MARSH	946.85	1,104.65	1,262.46	1,420.27	1,735.89	2,051.50	2,367.12	2,840.54
NEW MILTON	969.71	1,131.33	1,292.95	1,454.57	1,777.81	2,101.05	2,424.28	2,909.14
RINGWOOD	986.32	1,150.71	1,315.09	1,479.48	1,808.25	2,137.03	2,465.80	2,958.96
ROCKBOURNE	986.69	1,151.13	1,315.58	1,480.03	1,808.93	2,137.82	2,466.72	2,960.06
SANDLEHEATH	949.81	1,108.11	1,266.41	1,424.71	1,741.31	2,057.91	2,374.52	2,849.42
SOPLEY	981.77	1,145.40	1,309.03	1,472.66	1,799.92	2,127.18	2,454.43	2,945.32
SWAY	956.58	1,116.01	1,275.44	1,434.87	1,753.73	2,072.59	2,391.45	2,869.74
TOTTON & ELING	1,009.17	1,177.37	1,345.56	1,513.76	1,850.15	2,186.54	2,522.93	3,027.52
WHITSBURY	951.71	1,110.32	1,268.94	1,427.56	1,744.80	2,062.03	2,379.27	2,855.12
WOODGREEN	954.77	1,113.89	1,273.02	1,432.15	1,750.41	2,068.66	2,386.92	2,864.30

69. PAY POLICY STATEMENT (REPORT C).

Cllr M S Wade disclosed a pecuniary interest in this item as his wife worked for the Authority. He did not participate in the debate and abstained from voting. Cllrs S S Wade and Mrs Wyeth disclosed non-pecuniary interests in this item as family members worked for the Authority. They concluded that there were issues under common law which prevented them from speaking and voting. They did not speak and abstained from voting.

The Council considered a proposed Pay Policy statement.

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14, attached at appendix 1 to Report C, be approved.

70. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

Cllr Mrs McLean be appointed to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee in place of Cllr M Wade.

CHAIRMAN

Attachment: Minute No.65 – Appendices 1 and 2

(CL250213)

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – ‘IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT MONEY’

I began my budget speech last year with the statement “This should be a splendid year of celebration for our country.” And it did not disappoint!

The Country’s success in delivering ‘Olympic and Para Olympic Games exceeded everyone’s expectations as did the fantastic performances of our athletes at the two games and throughout the summer. And who could have foreseen that the wonderful celebrations of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee would culminate in her Majesty’s presence at our own New Forest and Hampshire County Show, when the rain clouds lifted for the final event of her tremendous tour.

And we played our part. Working with Towns and Parishes, with Colleges, the National Park Authority and other partners we helped thousands of people and especially thousands of children greet the Olympic torch on a day they will never forget. And, as I said throughout, our support wasn’t about lots of money. It was about our staff volunteering and keeping cheerful order in the rain. It was about working with others. And it is about building on the enthusiasm generated. We now can boast the only wheelchair rugby team in the south and host a new sport, handball, in our centres.

Making the most of our resources. Building partnerships with others. Delivering good services. These are the things which are bringing us through these difficult years.

Despite a reduction in government grants, the Council has produced a balanced budget without the need to use any of its reserves. The Council will spend approximately £84 million this year on continuing to deliver important services such as refuse and recycling collections, street cleaning, public toilets, housing, community and leisure facilities and coastal protection.

So before turning to the budget for the year ahead, I’d like to reflect on some of our successes and thank my fellow Portfolio Holders for ensuring we continue to deliver our promises.

Starting with Jill Cleary and Housing, this year has seen the completion of the major refurbishment of the North New Milton Estate. As John Ward’s video illustrated, one of the biggest projects undertaken by this Council at over £6 million was delivered on time, within budget and to a high quality.

The year has also seen the start of the Council’s major programme of investment in adding to our stock of affordable housing by buying or building. We are on target to have added over 30 houses in the first year.

Under Di Brook’s leadership, our Health and Leisure Centres have had another excellent year. Within the budget figures presented to Cabinet you will have seen reference to an additional £150,000 income generated this year and predicted to continue.

I have already commented on the role of this Portfolio in continuing to build an Olympic and Para Olympic legacy. Di is also working together with Totton and Eling Town Council to secure major lottery funds for a scheme to safeguard the future of Eling Tide Mill and enhance its visitor appeal.

Paul Vickers' stewardship of Planning and Transportation continues to ensure that difficult decisions whether arising from new legislation or local issues are taken after full and proper consultation and dealt with logically and fairly. We have in place well agreed local plans that suit the needs of the special place that we live in and transportation policies which benefit our residents, visitors and businesses alike.

Colin Wise has not just steered us through one of the most challenging budget processes ever - of which more later. He is also overseeing an extremely important asset management programme. Last year we completed major works at our Lymington and Lyndhurst offices to allow us to share accommodation with the National Park Authority and save the taxpayer money. This year we have completed a major transformation of public service offices in Ringwood with the opening of the new shared office building. Working together again – this time with the County Council and the Town Council. Oh and did I say, on time and in budget. And just one of a number of schemes ensuring that we make the most of the Council's physical assets.

Providing excellent front-line services is vitally important so I am pleased to congratulate my Deputy Edward Heron on the work of his Environment Services Portfolio.

It has been a difficult year weather-wise as well as financially, but staff have kept our street services operating in rain and snow. On top of this we have secured a grant of over £1.8 million to introduce kerbside glass recycling. Work is well in hand to start this improved service by the summer.

The theme of working together and making a little money go along way applies to my Portfolio of Employment and Tourism. The New Forest Business Partnership has gone from strength to strength as has New Forest Tourism. The Brand New Forest approach and innovations such as the Twizzy provide real cost effective support to the local economy. I am especially encouraged by our work with schools and colleges to encourage apprenticeships, not least in our own workforce. Support for businesses has never been more important.

In commending the Portfolio Holders, I am sure they would all join me in thanking other members for their contribution. Task and Finish Groups are now a mature and well understood way of working. Their contribution to making sure we develop the right new policies and deal with important local issues well is invaluable.

All Portfolios have also contributed to making the savings to keep us in a strong position as we make our budget decisions for 2013/14.

So what are we proposing?

First housing, where matters are comparatively straightforward. We are proposing an increase in rents of 4.1% in line with the Government's rent restructuring guidelines and providing for a capital programme of almost £14 million to maintain our stock in excellent condition and add new affordable housing. Those present at our last Cabinet meeting will have been heartened by the warm endorsement of our housing policies and performance from the tenants' representatives. Long may that continue!

Matters with the General Fund are far less clear, as all who attended Bob Jackson's excellent presentation recently will understand.

We have already had to make very difficult decisions over the replacement of the Council Tax benefit scheme. Thanks again to the Task and Finish Group for their dedicated work on this. I believe our consultation on this has been exemplary and that we have worked well to communicate with Town and Parish Councils as they have been dragged into the tax base repercussions. Our grant to them will be confirmed today.

Beyond this the financial settlement has been late and incredibly complex with the final decisions only taken by Government in mid-February.

What is clear is that the period of austerity continues. We are again required to make substantial savings. We now know that reductions in grant will continue into 2014/15 and 2015/16 and beyond. We also know that economic and housing growth will be the key factor in attracting more grant. This presents huge issues for an area like the New Forest, and will be a crucial debate for the Council to have in the months ahead.

But what we also know is that we continue to start from a strong financial base and have a great track record of preparing well for future challenges. We have already made savings to ensure a balanced budget for 2013/14. We are already planning for the years beyond and will be saying more on this in our Cabinet meetings in the next few months.

The budget also includes a significant capital programme showing that we are still able to invest where it makes good business sense for the running of services and for the good of our taxpayers.

Making the most of our money and making it about more than just money will continue to be key. Working with others will continue to be key. Maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of our excellent workforce will be key.

As many households in our community face continued rises in the cost of living, we are able to offer some practical help for residents by not increasing our council tax. For a third successive year at a time when many councils are making cuts to services or using their reserves, our sensible and proactive approach to financial planning means we are in a position to balance our budget, yet again, and commit to delivering quality, value-for-money council services.

My sincere thanks go to the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and all our staff, and all members in both parties for your support in making this possible.

I move our budget proposals.

Budget 2013.

Thank the officers.

I want to start off by highlighting a couple of principles that the Lib Dems hold dear and that isresponsibility and fairness in society.

For example....keeping the council tax at zero when we are offered a sum of money by the government to do so..... is both fair and responsible..... and so we would be doing the same.

But, in future years, will there still be a government incentive to do this.....later I explain a way of more savings on costs to help towards a zero increase.

So on the topics of responsibility and fairness I would like to introduce 2 amendments to the budget.

The first is around the subject of responsibility of the

Housing need for homeless males over 24 years of age.

So.... I want to talk to you about the needs of this particular homeless group.

I believe you all received a letter from a lady at the CAB....sent on her own behalf....

It was about the need in the NFDC area for a 'night shelter' for males over the age of 24 who find themselves homeless and sleeping rough.....and I know that some of you replied to her letter.

To prompt your memoriesher letter went on to explain the fact that other councils have some form of 'night shelter' for those aged over 24.....and she said it is appalling that in such an affluent society, people are sleeping in the forest, under the pier and in their cars.

So ...the letters contents prompted me to arrange a meeting with her and a couple of meetings with her colleagues at the CAB.....and all her colleagues agree with contents of the letter.

Actually the problem isn't actually confined to males....it does apply to females as well but I am told by the experts to a much much lesser degree as more often females have children and they therefore become a priority for some form of housing.....males over the age of 24 and not e.g. having any mental health issues or drug issues..... and are sleeping rough.....it would appear have to make their own way in the world.

So firstly why over 24.....well between the ages of 16 and 24 we have in our area.....'nightstop'.....which is run as part of 'community first' ...and we give £15,000 a

year to them for nightstop..... Nightstop appears to be a wonderful organisation and I know that NFDC was in there at its inception in our area.....actually when the Lib Dems were in charge.

I have had a long chat with the lady who runs nightstop and with nightstop they get referrals from other agencies and these homeless young people, of both sexes, who are not suffering from any mental illness or strong addiction..... are placed within a family home.....there are 13 in our area...some are with nice Grandmas with home baking and others are with modern families..... And they are with them for normally 1 to 5 nights.....as emergency accommodation...last year nightstop had 86 referralsan increase in referrals of 50%.

Let me tell you what it says on their website about homelessness.....

“People can often think that this is a city issue but homelessness exists here in the New Forest too. With Nightstop being the only emergency service in the forest it is crucial to keep this service available for those suffering homelessness and the dramatic impact on their lives in our forest community.

So.... what about those aged over 24how big is the problem.....the fact is I don't know....but the experts at nightstop and those at the CAB say that it does exist in the NFDC area.

I had a couple of long chats with the Housing Needs Manager at Southampton City Council who confirmed that their needs are a lot easier to identify as they find a lot of people sleeping rough in certain areas and car parks.... ours is a greater geographical area with people sleeping in cars or tents or possibly in barns or on the forest .

In Southampton they have 180 beds normally available and they increased these by 20 in the recent snowy weather.....but she did say that the reason that they need so many is because people drift in from other council areas.....like ours.... if they don't have any such accommodation....in fact she specifically said that they get people from Totton because their Millbrook road refuge is just a short bus ride down the road from Totton and people don't see line drawn on a map.....all that they see is a shelter for the night. In fact they have just taken a male from our area and are willing to bear the cost for him, but asked me who to contact at the NFDC about certain issues with him....this is very recent information that I have received and so I'll talk to the portfolio holder after the meeting with the contact info.

So anyway, there is another expert saying that we have a need.

So how many is it in our area that need a night shelter..I don't know ...I'm not an expert.....but the experts that I have spoken to.....say that there is a need.

Let me tell you a brief story as to why I know that there is a need.....

Tell story.....

Ladycross Road garages

Man asleep in car....full of 'junk'.

Housing list for 2 years...no job, no bank account....no fixed abode.

Summer no too bad...but the winter needed some respite when very cold.

Reduction in JSA....no cooking facilities.

Also sleeping rough recently....Tent on reclaimed land....Dibden Bay.

The thing is that if we identified the actual need and set up some form of night shelter we wouldn't have to actually run it ourselves...usually charities like community first with night stopor churches get involved.....there are many was that we can take a lead for our needy.

You would need a task and finish group to look into it.

But this is a budget meetingand your thinkingwhat about funding...

Well I found out something that I had not heard of before... It is a government initiative called....'No Second Night Out'the name speaks for itself and it was introduced in 2011.

Areas are split into regional sub groups....ours is Southampton, Portsmouth, IOW, NF, Havant, Gosport and Fareham.....and the lead council is Southampton City Council and in 2011/12 it was given £40,000 .

They have apparently had meetings to try to sort out a way forward.

This year2012/13 it was given £377,000 and none of this money has been spent at all I have been told....I have checked and it is ring fenced and cannot be taken away.

I've been told that there is not likely to be any more money for the next financial year and if there is some, it would in all probability go to councils that have started up schemes with the revenue already provided.

So there is the need say the experts.....I can't quantify it, I don't consider myself an expertbut there is ringfenced money...what do you say.....how about it....shall we identify our need and ask for some of the money to fill that need in some way.....There's about £0.4m sitting thereif we don't take some of it.....someone else will.

Shall we form a Task and finish group to look into it ? and ask for some of this money to be released.

So That 1st amendment is around responsibilities....just because we don't have a legal responsibility to these people if they are not e.g. mentally ill or addicted in some way we do have a moral responsibility and I used these exact words to the Housing Needs Manager at Southampton and she said that those were the exact words that she had used in a recent report.....we have a moral responsibility.

The 2nd amendment is around fairness and it revolves around cutting expenditure

By cutting staffing levels.

I have the figures for staffing levels for the last few years from Manjitand sure enough we have made savings.

I attend the 'meet and greet new staff' meetings along withand I know from conversations therethat every time someone leaves the NFDC their vacant post is looked at critically to see if it is still required or can it be filled with a redeployment transfer.

But there is one area that has not been looked at that in my opinion is way over staffed.....and that is here in this council chamber.....us.

We are on the payroll....and come on lets be honestif you are not in a governing position the workload is not that great...there are 60 of us and that number could easily be cut by 25 to 35 in this chamber.

We are not paid for responsibility....we are paid for manhoursthe Independent Remuneration Panel made that clear from the start....only if you have a special position in the council are you paid for that responsibility.

There would be problems for those with a very large geographical areas and with several parish councils to servicelike e.g.

But putting those aside the financial saving on allowances (which is in fact just another name for salary).....for 25 less of us is....almost £150K a year. On top of that there is the saving on travel claims etc. ...so the saving could possibly end up around £200K.

I know that you can't just reduce the level of councillors it has to go to the government.

But as a matter of fairness.....I feel that if we are looking very critically outwardly at the staffing levels of all departmentsand consequently restructuring of all our services to save costs..... then we should also be looking inwardly..... in a very critical way..... at ourselves.

After all....as I said in the beginning.... in future years there may not be incentives from the government to keep council tax at zero and so a saving of around £200K represents a reduction of approx. 2% on the council tax.

So I believe that a task and finish group should be formed in order to investigate and process this suggestion.

Amendment No1.

That this council forms a task and finish group to investigate the need for a night shelter or similar in our area, with particular emphasis on the plight of males over 24 years of age.

To look at the various ways this could be set up with the co-operation of other bodies.

To investigate the release of funds from the ‘ No Second Night Out’ budget.

Amendment No.2

That this council forms a task and finish group to investigate decreasing expenditure by reducing the number of councillors on the NFDC.