

21 OCTOBER 2013

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 21 October 2013.

- p Cllr Ms L C Ford – Chairman
- p Cllr Mrs M D Holding – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

- p A R Alvey
- p Mrs D E Andrews
- p G C Beck
- p Mrs S V Beeton
- ap Ms R Bellows
- p Mrs S M Bennison
- ap J E Binns
- p D A Britton
- p Mrs D M Brooks
- ap S J Clarke
- p Mrs J L Cleary
- ap 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
- p Mrs A J Hoare
- 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
- ap B D Lucas

Councillors:

- p Mrs A E McEvoy
- p Mrs M McLean
- p A D O'Sullivan
- p N S Penman
- ap J Penwarden
- p L R Puttock
- p A W Rice
- p B Rickman
- p W S Rippon-Swaine
- p Mrs M J Robinson
- ap Mrs A M Rostand
- p D J Russell
- p R F Scrivens
- p Miss A Sevier
- p M D Southgate
- p A J Swain
- p M H Thierry
- ap 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 Woodifield
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens

27. MINUTES (PAPER A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllrs M Wade & Mrs Wyeth in Minute 31 – Report of the General Purposes & Licensing Committee dated 13 September 2013.

Cllrs Kendal & Mrs Robinson in Minute 33 – Questions Under Standing Order 22a (Question 2).

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman's engagements undertaken since the last meeting of the Council were reported in the monthly Information Bulletins.

The Chairman reminded members that Sunday 10 November was Remembrance Day, when the Council would be represented at a number of Remembrance Sunday services. The Chairman would attend the Ringwood Town Service at the Parish Church in Ringwood Market Place and lay a wreath at the Town War Memorial. The Deputy Chairman would do likewise at St Saviour's, Brockenhurst, as would the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, at St Luke's Parish Church in Sway.

30. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Cabinet meeting due to take place on Wednesday 6 November had been cancelled due to insufficient business.

31. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND CABINET.

Report of General Purposes and Licensing Committee

Cllr M S Wade disclosed a pecuniary interest in this item as his wife worked for the Authority. He did not speak and abstained from voting. Cllr Mrs Wyeth disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in this item as a family member worked for the Authority. She did not speak or vote.

Cllr Beck, Chairman of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, presented the report of the meeting held on 13 September 2013.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendation be adopted.

Report of Cabinet

Cllr Rickman, the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet, presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2 October 2013.

Item 1 - Budget Update on Discretionary Grant Paid to Town and Parish Councils

Cllr C Harrison referred to the letter sent from the Communities and Local Government Minister, Brandon Lewis to Cllr Ken Cleary, Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils which indicated that in 2014/15 the funding provided to local authorities, in respect of local council tax support, would be £3.3billion which was the same level of support that was received in 2013/14. He questioned the decision to reduce the discretionary grant paid to local town and parish councils, when it appeared that the Council would receive the same level of funding in 2014/15 as it did in 2013/14.

Other members agreed with Cllr C Harrison's concern. The noted that the funding would not be separately identified, but would form part the overall grant and it was still up to local authorities to decide the level of grant paid to town and parish councils. In the current financial climate, the Council should be considerate of other public bodies to ensure that residents were supported. Concerns were expressed at reduced funding would have on town and parish councils. This was likely to require increasing precepts, cutting staff and services. Some members queried whether sufficient consultation had been undertaken on this issue.

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder said that this Authority was facing funding reductions of approximately £2.8million over the next three years. The Council had to face difficult decisions in compensating for the significant loss in government funding. The progressive reduction in the grant paid to town and parish councils meant that town and parish councils could increase their precepts incrementally to adjust their budgets accordingly. In reality, the drop in funding to local councils represented a 2% reduction, compared to the 12% loss of funding to this Council.

Other members expressed the view that detailed discussions on this matter should wait until the views of the town and parish councils were known. The Council would meet with town and parish councils on 31 October and the views expressed at that meeting would be presented to the Cabinet in December. Some members were confident that town and parish councils would understand this Council's position and respond accordingly.

The Leader of the Council said that the Council had, and would continue to, undertake extensive dialogue with town and parish councils on this matter.

On the motion that the report be received, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

32. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

There were none.

33. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A.

Cllr Mrs Robinson disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in question 2 of this item as she worked for the organisation which was carrying out the consultation with residents of the care home that was subject of their question. She had taken legal advice and had been advised that there were no issues under common law which prevented her from remaining in the meeting for consideration of this question. She wished members to be aware of her position.

Cllr Kendal disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in question 2 of this item as an Executive Member at Hampshire County Council and would be party to the discussion making on this matter. He concluded that there were no issues under common law which prevented him from remaining in the meeting for the consideration of this question.

Question 1: from Cllr Lagdon to Cllr Mrs Cleary, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Communities

(Cllr Lagdon was not present and the question was asked by Cllr Scrivens).

"Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities please give us her opinion as to the local Constabulary's ability to effectively police the town of Totton, when in fact at times recently, due to cuts in front-line policing, the town has been left with only two officers on duty over a full shift in community policing, one being a PC and the other a PCSO with no powers of arrest? This is to cover a population of 29,000 citizens, a fact made even worse when you consider that over half of the shift can be spent on paperwork and admin.

How can these officers be expected to cover a population of this size with such meagre resources?

I would ask the Portfolio Holder to urgently enquire of the Police & Crime Commissioner if this is indeed the situation and what he proposes to do about it."

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder replied that there were no fewer officers in Totton than before the recent reorganisation. New shift patterns had been arranged across the Forest which meant that there was greater coverage. The team at Totton had changed their way of working which meant that although there were fewer officers on duty at any one time there was more coverage of hours. In addition, the area was covered 24/7 by Targeted Patrol Teams. These were officers who dealt with immediate/critical incidents. The Portfolio Holder considered that there were sufficient police resources in Totton. Total crime and anti-social behaviour in Totton had significantly reduced since the same period last year.

Question 2: from Cllr D Harrison to Cllr Mrs Brooks, Portfolio Holder for Health & Leisure

"The enthusiasm of local Conservative politicians to be seen campaigning against the closure of Care Homes like Cranleigh Paddock seems to be matched by the determination of Conservative politicians, running Hampshire County Council, to close such homes. Does the Portfolio Holder for Health matters appreciate the degree of anxiety and upset that these proposals are causing?"

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder replied that she did. In response to a supplementary question regarding the recent resignation of Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Adult Social Care and the effect this would have on the decision-making process, the Portfolio Holder said that she understood that the final decision would not be delayed.

34. PARTNERSHIP FOR URBAN SOUTH HAMPSHIRE (PUSH) – APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINY MEMBER.

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Glass be appointed to serve as the Council's representative on the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire's Scrutiny Committee.

35. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

That Cllrs Mrs Beeton be appointed to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel in place of Cllr Swain.

CHAIRMAN

(CL211013)