

9 DECEMBER 2013

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Monday, 9 December 2013.

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

Councillors:

- ap A R Alvey
- ap 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
- ap S P Davies
- p W H Dow
- ap 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
- p Mrs P Jackman
- ap M J Kendal
- p A N G Kilgour
- p 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
- 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
- p Miss A Sevier
- p M D Southgate
- ap A J Swain
- 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
- ap Mrs C V Ward
- p J G Ward
- p C A Wise
- ap Mrs B M Woodifield
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

D Yates, R Jackson, J Mascall, Miss G O'Rourke, Mrs R Rutins and Ms M Stephens.

36. MINUTES (PAPER A).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr C Harrison disclosed an interest in Minute 42 – Questions Under Standing Order 22a (Questions 1 & 2).

38. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Chairman had attended a variety of events and these were listed in the latest Information Bulletin.

The Chairman was pleased to report that a number of councillors had offered to help with fundraising events for her two chosen charities for the rest of the year. The first event held as a result of this was a Christmas floral decoration demonstration on Tuesday, 3 December at Greyfriars in Ringwood. The event was a huge success and £43.45 was raised for her two chosen charities. The Chairman thanked Sue Rickman (the Leader of the Council's wife) and Cllr Mrs Wyeth for all their help with this event.

The Chairman announced the following further events: -

- Friday 28 February – a visit Bletchley Park in Milton Keynes, organised by Cllr Allan Glass.
- Sunday 23 March – a boat trip with afternoon tea at Hurst Castle, organised by Cllr Diane Andrews; and
- Thursday 1 May – the Chairman would host a gala dinner with a guest speaker at Rhinefield House Hotel.

The Chairman hoped members would support these events. Further details and information on each event could be obtained from Donna Langfield in Democratic Services or viewed on the Councillors area of the intranet.

The Chairman announced that one of the Council's recycling crews had received an award from Horses and Road Safety Awareness (HRSA) for their contribution to horse and rider safety on the Forest's roads. Simon Hughes, Chris Young and Craig Phipps were nominated after a horse rider experienced particularly considerate driving by the recycling truck. The Chairman offered her congratulations.

39. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Leader of the Council was pleased to report that Hampshire County Council had decided to retain Cranleigh Paddock dementia unit.

40. 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 4 December 2013.

Council Tax Reductions & Discounts 2014/15

Cllr C Harrison queried the Cabinet's decision to increase the minimum council tax contribution to 10%, from the 8.5% that applied under the transitional arrangements, and the Cabinet's aspiration to move towards a 20% minimum contribution from all households in future years. He expressed the view that this would place pressure on vulnerable householders as well as on Council Tax staff managing the increase in council tax summonses.

Other members agreed with Cllr C Harrison's concern. In addition to the effect on lower income residents there might be a detrimental impact on residents currently struggling to pay council tax. Other members expressed the view that the Council had a duty to be fair to all residents and as such should monitor whether the Cabinet's decision achieved a fair balance.

The Deputy Leader of the Council expressed the view that it was the responsibility of all New Forest residents to fund Council services. The Council had limited choices in terms of how services would be funded in the future and wished to avoid cutting services or increasing council tax. He felt that the recommendation of the Task & Finish Group set up to examine this issue had achieved a fair balance. In putting the actual payments into perspective, the Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder informed members that the maximum amount of council tax to be paid would be £2.53 a week and the lowest £1.88 per week.

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

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

41. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22.

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

"Does the Leader of the Council share my shock that a recent poll of young people, aged between 18 and 24, revealed that only 12% intended to vote in forthcoming elections?"

Answer:

The Leader of the Council replied that he was not shocked and highlighted how the Council engaged with young people. The Council communicated with young people through social media channels such as facebook and twitter as well as having a dedicated youth website INQ. The Council also took part in a variety of events such as Youth Speaks, Freshers' Fairs at Totton and Brockenhurst Colleges and Shoutabout, all aimed at raising awareness of the Council and its services for young people. The Council actively sought the views of young people about council services and issues of importance to them and would continue to do so.

Cllr D Harrison requested that a Task & Finish Group be established to look at a range of measures that could be implemented or improved upon to promote youth involvement in the democratic process. The Leader declined this request.

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

Cllr C Harrison disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in questions 1 & 2 of this item as a trustee of Age Concern New Forest. He concluded that there were no issues under common law to prevent him from remaining in the meeting for consideration of these questions.

Question 1: from Cllr D Harrison to Cllr Mrs Cleary, Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder

"Will the Council agree to restore the funding to the charity, Age Concern, in order that pensioners can continue to attend and enjoy the weekly luncheon clubs at West Totton and Totton & Eling Community Centre, until such time as Hampshire County Council agrees that it will fund this important service?"

Question 2: from Cllr Lagdon to Cllr Mrs Cleary, Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder

"Can the Portfolio Holder tell this Council why once again we appear to be targeting the elderly and infirm in the front line cuts which this Council are carrying out? I refer to the cuts to Age Concern's grant which has resulted in the possible loss of Lunch Clubs in Totton. This is the only time some of our elderly residents get a hot meal provided or are able to meet their peers".

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded once to both the above questions as they addressed the same issue.

The Portfolio Holder said that in 2012 she, along with Cabinet colleagues, had taken the decision to cease subsidising the Meals on Wheels service in the District as the service was the direct responsibility of Hampshire County Council. At the same time, she had felt it wrong for the Council to continue to provide financial support to individual luncheon clubs when others in the District received none. Officers had met with representatives of all the supported luncheon clubs and agreed a process for withdrawing funding over a three year period. It had been agreed that the Council would cease supporting the Totton luncheon clubs in April 2014. Any luncheon club could apply for grant funding from the Council, but would have to be considered along with all other applications for grants.

In response to a supplementary question regarding the future of Totton luncheon club, the Portfolio Holder replied that she hoped that luncheon clubs would receive financial support from Hampshire County Council, which was responsible for older persons' services.

Question 3: from Cllr C Harrison to Cllr Wise, Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder

"I understand that a budget was agreed for roof repairs to Appletree Court (ATC) and that in the course of this work being carried out further repair work has been identified. Please can you tell me the original budget and the revised budget for these roof repairs".

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that further work had been found essential. It was expected that this would mean expenditure of 6–7% above the original budget but, as work was on-going, the final costs were not yet known. He would be happy to provide Cllr C Harrison with more detailed financial information after the meeting.

43. ABSENCE FROM MEETINGS – CLLR MISS ANN HICKMAN.

As Cllr Miss Hickman was in attendance, the item was withdrawn.

44. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cllr Southgate be appointed to the Planning Development Control Committee in place of Cllr Mrs Rostand; and
- (b) That Cllr Mrs Wyeth be appointed to the General Purposes & Licensing Committee in place of Cllr Miss Hickman.

CHAIRMAN

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