

## **REPORT OF CABINET**

**(Meeting held on 4 June 2014)**

### **1. BEACH HUTS AT MILFORD ON SEA (WESTOVER) (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 4)**

The Cabinet has considered a report on options for the way forwards for the beach huts at Milford on Sea that were damaged in the severe storm on the night of 14 February 2014.

Inspection and subsequent surveys of the terraced concrete beach huts at Milford on Sea, following the severe storm on 14 February 2014, had established that there were significant grounds for concern about the safety and stability of those huts that remained. As a result some of the huts were demolished, some propped up, while others, that appeared to be less damaged, had been secured to prevent access for safety reasons. Further survey work had concluded that the huts, in their current condition, were no longer fit for purpose. The presence of asbestos in the structures also made the essential repair and maintenance work more problematic. The safety of all users of the promenade area and beach have remained of primary concern in all the actions that have been taken.

A number of potential options for the future treatment of the beach huts and promenade have been identified and examined in detail by a working group established by the Portfolio Holder. This process included extensive consultations, including with the Beach Hut Owners' Association, Milford on Sea Parish Council, and ward councillors; while all the individuals affected had been contacted by letter. The report concluded that two options - to allow the repair of individual huts; and to defer action until long term coastal protection works had been constructed - should be discounted for the reasons set out. Because a decision on the remaining options affects the wider community, it was suggested that further discussions should be held with Milford on Sea Parish Council, the New Forest Beach Hut Owners' Association and individuals affected to inform a further report to the meeting of the Cabinet in August.

Under the public participation scheme, the Cabinet was addressed by a representative of the New Forest Beach Hut Owners' Association and 6 individuals. There was unanimity of view from those speaking that beach huts were part of the historic character of Milford on Sea and that those that had been lost should be replaced. While the Beach Hut Owner's Association did not object to the proposed course of action set out in the report, the other speakers considered that the option of allowing individual beach hut owners to repair their huts should not be discounted. They emphasised their determination to resist demolition of the huts and to seek compensation for the loss of their property should the Council pursue this course of action.

The Parish Council consider that other options to those recommended in the report should not be discounted at this stage.

At the meeting it was emphasised that, although a preferred option of demolition and replacement was being identified, to allow resources to be directed most effectively, no decisions are being taken at this stage. Research and consultations will continue with interested parties. The only objective was to secure a fair resolution for all parties involved.

In response to the concerns expressed at the meeting that insufficient consideration had been given to the condition of individual beach huts, the Cabinet agreed that further survey work of individual huts should be commissioned to establish whether groups of them could be repaired and retained. It is important however that this should not delay the implementation of a final solution, and work on the preferred option, of demolition and replacement, will continue in the meantime. In order to provide a degree of certainty about the replacement of these huts, it has also been agreed that, provided the survey work does not identify any structural defects that require a hut to be removed immediately for safety reasons, no hut should be demolished until planning consent is in place for its replacement.

## **2. MITIGATION STRATEGY FOR EUROPEAN SITES – ADOPTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 5)**

The Cabinet has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance that has been prepared to implement Policy DM3 of the Local Plan Part 2. This policy deals with the mitigation of the impact of development on the European Nature Conservation Sites. The policy responds to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Inspector's requirements on this topic generated a significant body of additional work, contributing to delays in progressing the Examination of the Local Plan Part 2. A steering group, including the relevant statutory agencies, helped to develop the policy and draft mitigation strategy, which were then subject to public consultation. The responses to that consultation are summarised in Appendix 3 to Report B to the Cabinet, and the manner in which those issues have been addressed in the final Strategy document is set out in Appendix 4 to the report. Further comments have also now been received from members of the steering group.

The Mitigation Strategy document has been adopted, subject to final editing by the Policy Planning Manager, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, which will include taking into account any final comments from consultees on the steering group.

## **3. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2013/14 (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 6)**

The Annual Performance report this year has been produced in a more accessible format, suitable for a wide variety of communication methods. The report reviews the Council's performance during 2013/14 against The Delivery Plan of Corporate Aims. The Delivery Plan, which compares performance against the key activity milestones, also includes updates and new key activities for 2013/14 and 2014/15, and is attached as Appendix A to the report.

Graphics have been used to highlight the Council's key achievements. The achievements have been grouped under the key headings of "Delivering where it counts"; "Keeping people safe"; "Weathering the storm"; "Doing our bit for the environment"; "Making waves"; "Laying building blocks for the future"; and "Keeping it personal".

The Council's performance has to be seen within the context of continuing financial austerity. Council tax had remained unchanged for the fourth year, while government grant had reduced further. The Council nonetheless continues to provide and enhance its services to the local community. Further savings of around £200,000

were achieved during the year and, encouragingly, a number of income streams showed an improvement, realising a total of £709,000 additional income. This had generated a provisional outturn figure of £18.217 million, £939,000 below the original budget.

The report to the Cabinet sets out the provisional out turn figures, and variations, on the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme for 2013/14. Delays in the implementation of the capital programme are of some concern, with projects amounting to £4.71 million having been rephased into future years.

It has been agreed that, to assist town and parish councils' understanding of the Council's activities, the Annual Performance Report should be submitted to the next meeting of the New Forest Association of Local Councils.

#### **4. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT – FORECAST OUTTURN (BASED ON PERFORMANCE TO MAY 2014) (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 7)**

The Cabinet received financial performance information for the first 2 months of the financial year, which highlights the variations against budgets that have been identified to date. In addition further, continuing variations will be identified from the 2013/14 outturn savings and brought forwards into this year's budget.

A number of projects have been rephased into 2014/15, affecting this year's budget. Further information on the rephased projects, together with reports on other variations, are set out in sections 3 and 4 of the report. It is however confidently anticipated that the budgets will be achieved by the end of the financial year.

The winter storms continue to have a significant impact on budgets. The Council is still reclaiming money from the government to cover part of the cost of the Council's response. In addition, additional budgetary provision is being requested to allow the repair of the Hordle Cliff Path and to respond to the projected loss of income from beach hut licence fees.

The Cabinet:

- I. Noted the approval of additional funding of £134,000 for the Applemore Health and Leisure Centre fabric and business development project, which has already been reported to the Council;
- II. Approved additional funding of £62,000 for the Secure Wireless Network and Web Content Management ICT systems; and
- III. Noted the revised outturn forecasts of the General Fund (para 3.2 of Report D to the Cabinet), Capital (para 4.1) and Housing Revenue Account (para 5.1).

#### ***RECOMMENDED:***

- (a) ***That the Council be requested to approve budget variations of £81,000 for Hordle Cliff pathway repairs and £74,000 for loss of beach hut income;***

**Councillor B Rickman  
CHAIRMAN**