

16 NOVEMBER 2007

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Friday, 16 November 2007.

- p Cllr L R Puttock (Chairman)
- p Cllr A E J Shotter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- p G C Beck
- p J A G Hutchins
- p Mrs P Jackman
- p Mrs M McLean
- p J Penwarden
- p A W Rice TD
- p W S Rippon-Swaine

Councillors:

- e R F Scrivens
- p Mrs B Smith
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p P R Woods
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

Officers Attending:

Mrs M Dunsmore, A Hetherington, M Powell and, for part of the meeting, A Michel, Miss T Harwood and Mrs R Rutins.

21. MINUTES.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2007, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr M S Wade in minute No. 24.
Cllrs M S Wade and Mrs Wyeth in minute No. 28.

23. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

24. EXPENDITURE PLANS 2008/09 – 2011/2012 (REPORT A).

Cllr M S Wade declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a member of his worked for the authority and there was some discussion regarding employee pensions. He left the meeting during discussion of the item.

The Committee reviewed the expenditure plans for the period 2008/09 to 2011/12 and proposals for bids and savings.

In considering the revenue expenditure plan bids, some members felt that the bid for the Enforcement Officer was vital in assisting the Council in undertaking its enforcement duty under the Licensing Act 2003. Members supported this bid and hoped that it would be successful.

Some members queried the large contribution that the Authority made towards pension costs.

RESOLVED

That it be recommended to the Cabinet: -

- (i) That the proposed revenue expenditure bids and savings as set out in Appendix 2 to Report A to the Committee be agreed, and that, in particular, the bid for the Enforcement Officer be strongly supported; and
- (ii) That the proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 to Report A to the Committee be agreed.

25. REVIEW OF THE LICENSING POLICY (REPORT B).

The Committee considered the revised statement of Licensing Policy. The Policy had been published on 7 January 2005 and had to be reviewed by the Council every 3 years.

Members considered the minor changes to the Policy and felt that the document was well written and more succinct than the previous policy. Members congratulated officers on the success of the document.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved for publication on 7 January 2008 and that the advertisement of details of the Policy be agreed prior to that date.

26. ENFORCEMENT OF NFDC LICENSING FUNCTIONS (REPORT C).

The Committee considered the provision of licensing enforcement facilities and the progress being made under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Committee discussed the public's awareness and the impact on the quality of life of local residents, as well as the impact of the Gambling Act 2005.

Members discussed the importance of having sufficient levels of enforcement under the licensing regime and felt that steps needed to be taken to ensure that this was at an appropriate level to safeguard the quality of life for local residents.

Members considered current legislation and the powers of the Council to prohibit drinking in the streets. The Licensing Act 2003 had not made provision for Licensing Authorities to control public drinking. However, premises licences could be revoked if the premises were causing public nuisance.

Members were mindful that the smoking restrictions under the Health Act 2005 might increase the incidences of drinking in public places. The Police and Accredited Community Safety Officers had powers to remove individuals from the streets if they were causing antisocial and disorderly behaviour.

Members recognised that few premises in the New Forest were able to supply alcohol after midnight.

RESOLVED

That the Committee strongly endorses the expenditure plan bid for the provision of an Enforcement Officer.

27. POLLING PLACES AND POLLING DISTRICTS REVIEW (REPORT D).

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Polling Districts Working Party on the representations received in response to the review. The designation and future use of polling stations were also considered for recommendation to the Returning Officer..

The Working Party had also considered the future of low usage polling stations with high unit costs. The Working Party had recognised that these polling stations in were fairly well used in percentage terms and served distinct communities. The station at Fritham in particular was rarely used, however there was no alternative station within close proximity. This station was also in one of the wards affected by the death of a candidate and the delayed election had impacted on the turnout.. With these factors in mind, members felt that the future of these stations should be examined following the next parliamentary election when comparisons of usage would be more meaningful.

Members thanked the Elections team for all their hard work especially in light of the demands placed on the team following recent legislative changes.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations outlined in paragraph 3 to Report D to the Committee be approved.

28. LOCAL PAY SETTLEMENT (REPORT E).

Cllrs M S Wade and Mrs Wyeth declared personal and prejudicial interests as both had family members who worked for the Authority. They left the meeting during consideration of the item.

The Committee considered the national pay settlement and the local pay settlement following recent local pay negotiations through the Council's Pay Panel which had met on 23 March, 29 October and 6 November 2007.

Some members queried the contributions to staff pensions and whether this had been set at the appropriate level. Officers informed members that the pensions regulations had recently changed and that the 2008 figures had not yet been finalised.

Some members considered that public sector pay was poor in comparison to the private sector and that this might have a detrimental effect on the quality of individuals applying for posts, in particular high quality graduates would gravitate towards higher salary offers than those in the public sector. Staff within the public sector had to accept pay awards at a lower rate of inflation and some members felt that the Government should provide greater monetary support in order to prevent this.

The Council was currently undergoing a pay and reward strategy which sought to examine the Council's job evaluation scheme, make market comparisons with pay and review local agreements. The Council were proactively working towards reviewing all areas of recruitment and retention.

The Committee expressed a general concern that staff would not receive back pay until the New Year and felt that it was unfair that the lengthy negotiations had delayed staff receiving these monies. Members felt that more work could have been done to make the back payments in December in time for Christmas.

RESOLVED:

That the local pay ward of 2.5% be implemented from 1 April 2007; and

RECOMMENDED:

That spinal column point 6 be deleted from the pay structure from 1 April 2007, and all employees currently on this point be progressed to scp 7.

CHAIRMAN

(GPLC161107)