

6 MARCH 2015

**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, 6 March 2015.

p Cllr G C Beck (Chairman)  
p Cllr W H Dow (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

p Mrs S V Beeton  
p S J Clarke  
p J D Heron  
A N G Kilgour  
p Mrs A E McEvoy  
p Mrs M McLean  
p J Penwarden

**Councillors:**

p L R Puttock  
p R F Scrivens  
S S Wade  
ap Mrs C V Ward  
p P R Woods  
p Mrs P A Wyeth

**Officers Attending:**

Mrs M Sandhu and Ms M Stephens.

**28. MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2014 and 16 January 2015 be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

**29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

**30. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**31. FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT (REPORT A).**

The Committee considered a proposed revised policy on flexible retirement which was planned to be effective from 1 May 2015.

Flexible retirement allowed individuals aged 55 and over to make a request to the Council to reduce their hours or grade (by 40%) and draw down their pension. By taking up the reduced hours they also had the option of re-joining the pension scheme.

The current policy had been introduced in 2008. The aim of the review was to achieve improved management control, whilst providing flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Some members expressed the view that the Council should not exercise this discretion and therefore not offer flexible retirement in the future. They felt uncomfortable that individuals who retired flexibly did not phase into retirement but saw this as a permanent lifestyle change, and hindered employees wanting to progress in their careers. Whilst they appreciated that knowledge of long standing employees would be retained, they considered it would be at the expense of innovation and new ideas coming forward. Members also expressed the view that the change in policy amounted to flexible working, not retirement and, because there was no upper retirement limit, staff could remain in posts for long periods of time under their new contract arrangements.

On the other hand, other members expressed the view that working patterns and ways of working were constantly changing and that the Council needed to keep up with new styles of working. Officers of the Council could now work 'smarter' with improvements to information technology. Members felt that more experienced employees offering to take flexible retirement could mentor and train younger members of staff who could become their successors when they retired fully. They felt that the Council should not age-discriminate and that all employees should be offered flexible working options.

The Head of Human Resources pointed out that the proposed amended policy would ensure a more rigorous process was in place which balanced the needs of the council and of employees.

Upon a vote it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the proposed Flexible Retirement policy detailed in section 4 of Report A to the Committee be approved and that this be implemented from 1 May 2015.***

**32. LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE.**

The Chairman referred to the fact that it was the last meeting of the Committee before the quadrennial elections on 7 May 2015. He thanked members and officers for their contributions over the past four years and wished them well. The Chairman also made reference to the legislative changes that had come about during this period, such as the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2012, and its positive effect on the reduction of metal theft.

CHAIRMAN