

**2 DECEMBER 2015**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 2 December 2015

- \* Cllr B Rickman (Chairman)
- \* Cllr E J Heron (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

- \* Mrs S V Beeton
- \* J E Binns

**Councillors:**

- \* Mrs J L Cleary
- \* J D Heron

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Mrs D E Andrews  
W G Andrews  
P J Armstrong  
Mrs S M Bennison  
Mrs F Carpenter  
S J Clarke  
S P Davies  
Ms L C Ford

**Councillors:**

A T Glass  
L E Harris  
A K Penson  
L R Puttock  
Mrs C V Ward  
J G Ward  
M L White  
C A Wise

**Also In Attendance:**

Mr P Woodroof (Tenants' Representative)

**Officers Attending:**

R Jackson, J Mascall, Mrs H Aylett, Miss J Debnam, Mrs S Hamilton, G Miles, Miss G O'Rourke and Mrs J Stainer

**Apologies**

None were received.

**35 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by any member in connection with an agenda item.

**37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**38 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2016-2017**

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on amendments to the Council's local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to reflect changes that had been made to other benefits. Further reforms were also expected to be introduced during the spring of next year.

In the light of the increased financial pressures facing those on low incomes, and the likelihood that collection rates may suffer counter-productively in the face of any increase, the Cabinet concurred with the recommendation that there should be no change to the minimum contribution that each household must pay towards the Council Tax. All working age claimants (except those classified as vulnerable) currently paid 10% of their Council Tax.

The two changes that were proposed were to remove the family premium for new claims and to reduce the period for which a claim would be backdated from 6 months to 4 weeks. This mirrored changes being made to Housing Benefit and ultimately Universal Credit with effect from 1 April 2016 and would assist the administration of the Council's scheme. Some changes would be needed to the software used to manage the scheme, but the cost was expected to be modest and able to be contained within existing budgets. Removing the family premium was projected to achieve savings of £30,000 per annum, and reducing the backdating period to savings of £6,000 per annum. Very few claimants sought backdating of more than 4 weeks.

The Council had carried out consultations on the proposed changes but had received only 13 responses, most of which supported the proposal that the minimum contribution payable by working age claimants should not be increased.

**RESOLVED:**

That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet agrees that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be amended with effect on 1 April 2016 as follows:

- (i) That, subject to the necessary upgrading of the software administering the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the current scheme be amended by removing the family premium for new claims;
- (ii) That the period for which claims can be backdated be reduced from 6 months to 4 weeks; and
- (iii) That no change be made to the minimum contribution paid by those of working age (except those classified as vulnerable).

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Council agrees that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be amended with effect on 1 April 2016 as follows:***

- (i) That, subject to the necessary upgrading of the software administering the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the current scheme be amended by removing the family premium for new claims;*
- (ii) That the period for which claims can be backdated be reduced from 6 months to 4 weeks; and*
- (iii) That no change be made to the minimum contribution paid by those of working age (except those classified as vulnerable).*

**39 COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNTS AND EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM 2016-17**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel with respect to the discounts offered where properties were unoccupied. They also reviewed the previous decision that this Council should not levy a premium charge where properties were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 2 years.

**RESOLVED:**

That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet agrees that the current scheme of discounts and charges remain unchanged so that:

- (i) No changes be made to the discounts for properties which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished where major repair works or structural alterations are required, under way or recently completed;*
- (ii) No changes be made to the discounts for properties that are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished; and*
- (iii) The empty homes premium be not introduced.*

**RECOMMENDED:**

*That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Council agrees that the current scheme of discounts and charges remain unchanged so that:*

- (i) No changes be made to the discounts for properties which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished where major repair works or structural alterations are required, under way or recently completed;*
- (ii) No changes be made to the discounts for properties that are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished; and*
- (iii) The empty homes premium be not introduced.*

**40 THE COUNCIL TAX 2016-17 - SETTING THE TAX BASE**

The Cabinet considered the Tax Base for 2016/17, which was an important step in setting the Council Tax payable for that period. The factors taken into account in the calculation of the tax base were set out in Report Item 6 to the Cabinet and a summary of the tax base in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16 was attached as Appendix 3 to that report. There had been a slight increase in the tax base above that which had been expected.

A prudent approach continued to be taken to forecasting the tax base, which was expected to increase slightly in 2016/17. The calculation also took a realistic view of the likely collection rate. It was important the tax base was not overstated as any shortfall would result in interest costs falling on the Council's General Fund.

**RESOLVED:**

That, in so far as it is empowered to do so by law, the Cabinet agrees that:

- (i) The calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2016/17 be approved; and
- (ii) Pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2016/17 be as follows and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet.

PARISH/TOWN	TAXBASE 16/17
Ashurst & Colbury	915.8
Beaulieu	512.7
Boldre	1052.6
Bramshaw	344.2
Bransgore	1798.5
Breamore	177.4
Brockenhurst	1852.3
Burley	782.3
Copythorne	1205.7
Damerham	227.2
Denny Lodge	153.2
East Boldre	387.4
Elingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	603
Exbury & Lepe	110.4
Fawley	4505.8
Fordingbridge	2232.2
Godshill	221
Hale	254
Hordle	2381.9
Hyde	521.6
Hythe & Dibden	7323.5
Lymington & Pennington	6974.1
Lyndhurst	1399.2
Marchwood	2050.8
Martin	195.7
Milford on Sea	2781.1
Minstead	368.5
Netley Marsh	816
New Milton	10289.1
Ringwood	5146.6
Rockbourne	163.9
Sandleheath	281.6
Sopley	295.5
Sway	1686.4
Totton & Eling	9270.5
Whitsbury	102.3
Woodgreen	248.3
Whole District	69632.3

**RECOMMENDED:**

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- (i) *The calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2016/17 be approved; and*
- (ii) *Pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2016/17 be as follows and as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet.*

<b>PARISH/TOWN</b>	<b>TAXBASE 16/17</b>
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<b>Beaulieu</b>	<b>512.7</b>
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<b>Brockenhurst</b>	<b>1852.3</b>
<b>Burley</b>	<b>782.3</b>
<b>Copythorne</b>	<b>1205.7</b>
<b>Damerham</b>	<b>227.2</b>
<b>Denny Lodge</b>	<b>153.2</b>
<b>East Boldre</b>	<b>387.4</b>
<b>Elingham, Harbridge &amp; Ibsley</b>	<b>603</b>
<b>Exbury &amp; Lepe</b>	<b>110.4</b>
<b>Fawley</b>	<b>4505.8</b>
<b>Fordingbridge</b>	<b>2232.2</b>
<b>Godshill</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Hale</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Hordle</b>	<b>2381.9</b>
<b>Hyde</b>	<b>521.6</b>
<b>Hythe &amp; Dibden</b>	<b>7323.5</b>
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<b>Lyndhurst</b>	<b>1399.2</b>
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<b>Martin</b>	<b>195.7</b>
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<b>Woodgreen</b>	<b>248.3</b>
<b>Whole District</b>	<b>69632.3</b>

**41 SENIOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

The Cabinet considered the introduction of a new senior management structure for the authority following a review undertaken by the Chief Executive. The proposed new structure sought to provide robust, flexible arrangements to meet the challenges facing this authority over coming years in the climate of continuing financial restraint.

It was proposed that the Chief Executive would be supported by a single tier structure of 5 Executive Heads, with the current 9 service areas being amalgamated into functional groups. Three of the Executive Heads would focus on operating the Council's front line services; with 2 ensuring that business management arrangements were effective and efficient, with statutory duties and responsibilities being delivered. The proposed structure was set out in Appendix 1 to report item 7 considered by the Cabinet.

For a trial period of one year it was also proposed that one of the Executive Heads should deputise for the Chief Executive when absent, with an allowance being paid in recognition of the additional duties.

The selection process for the new posts would be held on 10 and 11 December 2015. The appointments would take effect from 1 January 2016 where an internal appointment was made. Any displaced Heads of Service would be placed on the redeployment register pending the outcome of future reviews by the new Executive Heads of the staffing structure for their service areas.

It was anticipated that the new senior management structure would generate savings of £300,000 per annum.

The Chief Executive would continue to act as the Statutory Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) to provide essential continuity, but this will be reviewed in 6 months' time.

To increase flexibility of response the powers delegated to the current Executive Directors and Heads of Service would be delegated to all of the new Executive Heads.

The Cabinet was advised that the Employee Side had commented that they welcomed the openness and clarity of the report and trusted that the same level would be maintained as the review filtered down through the employee structure.

The Leader thanked the existing senior management team for their assistance and participation in developing these proposals, and welcomed the Employee side's comments. He considered that the new structure would put the Council in a strong position to face the challenges ahead.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That all existing delegations of powers to Heads of Service and Executive Directors, that are the responsibility of the Cabinet, be delegated to the proposed new Executive Heads (regardless of their respective disciplines); and

- (b) That the General Purposes and Licensing Committee be advised that the proposed new salary bands for the posts of Executive Heads, as set out in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 of Report Item 7 considered by the Cabinet, are supported;

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the proposed new senior management structure, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report item 7 considered by the Cabinet, including the deletion of the post of Executive Director and the review of Heads of Service, be approved;*
- (b) *That the proposals for recruitment to the posts of Executive Heads, as set out in paragraph 5 of Report item 7 considered by the Cabinet, be approved;*
- (c) *That the principle of designating one Executive Head to act as a deputy for the Chief Executive, subject to review within 12 months, be approved;*
- (d) *That all existing delegations of powers to Heads of Service and Executive Directors, that are not the responsibility of the Cabinet, be delegated to the proposed new Executive Heads (regardless of their respective disciplines); and*
- (e) *That the Chief Executive be authorised to take all the necessary action and decisions to achieve the proposals set out in Report item 7 considered by the Cabinet, including arrangements for the selection process and transitional period.*

CHAIRMAN