

3 FEBRUARY 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 3 February 2016

- * 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
G C Beck
Mrs S M Bennison
G R Blunden
Mrs F Carpenter
Ms L C Ford
A T Glass

Councillors:

M R Harris
D Harrison
Mrs A J Hoare
A K Penson
Mrs C V Ward
C A Wise
M L White

Officers Attending:

R Jackson, Miss J Debnam, Mrs R Drummond, K Green, Mrs S Hamilton, Miss G O'Rourke, G Miles, Mrs R Rutins, Mrs M Sandhu and C Read

Apologies:

None were received.

47 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

49 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

50 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader advised Members that the Council faced significant decisions as the Cabinet found it necessary to recommend an increase in council tax for the first time in 6 years, as a result of continuing reductions in Government funding. It was however important to maintain front line services, such as refuse collection and recycling, planning and environmental health.

The proposed increase in Council tax, which it was now proposed would be 1.7 %, equivalent to just 5 pence per week for a Band D property, represented the best compromise between maintaining essential services and being fair to Council Taxpayers. The total cost of providing this Council's services would be £3.05 per week. The decision to increase council tax was not being taken lightly but, looking forwards, the financial challenges facing the Council were significant. The Council was already taking steps to meet this challenge, with the savings made through the new senior management structure one signal of the Conservative Group's determination to continue to provide the services that were valued by the local community at a fair cost. The developing Corporate Plan which would be considered at this meeting was now supported by a delivery plan that set out the areas that would be reviewed over the coming year, in order to identify further savings and improvements in services to ensure the Council continued to meet its objectives.

The changes being made within this Council, together with the Government's commitment to provide a longer term settlement, meant that the Medium Term Financial Plan would be reviewed early within the next financial year and would be included in the programme for the June meeting of the Cabinet.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive and Executive Heads for their continuing efforts to support this process.

51 THE CORPORATE PLAN 2016-2020 - "OUR CORPORATE PLAN"

The Cabinet considered the Corporate Plan for the period 2016 -2020 and the changes that had been made in response to comments received in response to consultations on the draft. The Cabinet was pleased to note the positive reaction to the draft Plan.

The Corporate Plan was now supported by a delivery plan, which set out detailed actions for 2016/17 and also made reference to the actions required in the longer term. Delivery would be monitored through a simple and proportionate performance management framework.

As with the previous Corporate Plan, communication about the Plan would be primarily through electronic means to optimise expenditure in its production and in disseminating the key messages.

Members discussed the actions set out in the delivery plan and re-emphasised the need to ensure that proposed actions were affordable and deliverable.

RECOMMENDED:

That the new Corporate Plan for 2016 -2020, “Our Corporate Plan”, and associated delivery plan, as attached as appendices to report item 4 considered by the Cabinet, be approved.

52 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2016/17

The Cabinet discussed the Medium Term Financial Plan, which had been developed further since consideration in January (Minute 46 refers) and now included the General Fund net budget requirement, the capital programme; and the recommended level of the Council tax for 2016/17.

It was noted that the budget shortfall identified in January had been addressed through further savings of £180,000 arising from the senior management review and revisions to the planned maintenance and replacement work programme for 2016/17 amounting to £300,000.

The Cabinet proposed to reduce the net budget requirement for 2016/17 to £17,491,770. This would amend the Band D Council Tax charge for 2016/17 to £158.36. Savings would be identified to cover the £36,210 reduction in the budget requirement.

The Cabinet noted the comments and recommendations of the Budget Task and Finish Group that had been adopted by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That it be agreed that there is a General Fund Net Budget Requirement of £17,491,770 in 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 5 to report item 5 considered by the Cabinet, including Business Development and Third Party Grant schemes as set out in Appendix 3 to report item 5;.***
- (b) That the site licence fees and service charges at the Stillwater Park be increased by 0.8%, in line with RPI inflation;***
- (c) That the Band D Council Tax for 2016/17 shall be £158.36;***
- (d) That the General Fund Capital Programme for 2016/17 of £4.133 million, as set out in Appendix 6 to report item 5 to the Cabinet, be approved; and***
- (e) That each of the Prudential Indicators, the Limits for 2016/17 to 2018/19 and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 7 to report item 5 to the Cabinet, be approved and adopted.***

53 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND HOUSING PUBLIC SECTOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account budget and housing public sector capital programme for 2016/17. This was the fifth year of the Housing Revenue Account self-financing system, with the first instalment of principal repayment of the settlement loan, amounting to £4.1 million, due to be made in 2017/18, reducing the spending resources available in that year.

It was proposed that rents would be reduced by 1% in line with Government requirements. The service charges for hostels and older persons' accommodation would be increased by 2% to ensure full cost recovery from the beneficiaries of the services. The increases in service charges, together with other variations to the budgets including increased income from reductions in vacant properties; would offset the loss of income arising from the rent reduction to £53,000 for the year.

The proposed revenue expenditure for 2016/17 showed an increase of £1.409 million compared to 2015/16 and the Cabinet was advised of the sources of the major variations. The budget for 2016/17 was projected to break even, maintaining a revenue account reserve balance of £1.014 million. Additional savings that had been identified during 2015/16 had, in accordance with Council policy, would be transferred to the acquisitions and development reserve to support continuing investment in the Council's housing stock.

The capital programme also showed an increase, with significant property development and enhancement programmes in addition to new acquisitions.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) *That the Housing Revenue Account budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of report item 6 considered by the Cabinet, be agreed;*
- (b) *That from 4 April 2016 a reduction in rents of 1% from the 2015/16 rent level, in accordance with Government requirements, be agreed;*
- (c) *That from 4 April 2016 an increase of 2% in hostel service charges be agreed;*
- (d) *That from 4 April 2016 an increase of 2% in older persons' accommodation service charges be agreed;*
- (e) *That from 4 April 2016 no increase in garage rents be agreed; and*
- (f) *That a 2016/17 Housing Capital Programme of £16.536m, as set out in paragraph 7.1 of report item 6 considered by the Cabinet, be agreed.*

54 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2016

In accordance with the requirement that the Council must, on an annual basis, make a scheme of members' allowances, the Cabinet considered the scheme to be made with effect from 1 April 2016.

RECOMMENDED:

That the current scheme of members' allowances be made as the scheme to apply from 1 April 2016.

55 DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

That the scheme of delegation of powers to officers be amended as shown in Appendix 1 to report item 8 considered by the Cabinet.

CHAIRMAN