

6 APRIL 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 April 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:

W G Andrews
G C Beck
Mrs S M Bennison
G R Blunden
Mrs F Carpenter
S J Clarke
A T Glass
D Harrison

Councillors:

Mrs A J Hoare
Mrs P Jackman
A K Penson
L R Puttock
Mrs C V Ward
M L White
C A Wise

Also In Attendance:

Mrs A Murphy, Tenants' Representative

Officers Attending:

R Jackson, Miss J Debnam, C Elliott, K Green, Miss G O'Rourke, C Read, Mrs J Stainer and Mrs K Williams

Apologies:

None were received from members of the Cabinet.

56 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

58 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

59 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader reminded members that this Council had agreed to take part in discussions on a bid for devolved powers for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, but would only take part in the final arrangements if the full Council concluded that it would be in the best interests of all of this District.

In discussions with Government it had become clear that any devolution deal would need to meet a number of central government conditions, including that of an elected mayor. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Authorities had voted overwhelmingly that a directly elected mayor could not be supported and consequently the devolution deal could not progress.

Shortly after this the Treasury had hosted a meeting to which some of the Councils in the Solent area (Portsmouth, Southampton, Gosport, Fareham, Isle of Wight, Eastleigh, Havant and East Hampshire) were invited to discuss devolution.

The Leader had now received a letter inviting the Council to attend regular meetings with the Leaders of the Solent devolution bid with a view that they would support this Council joining their proposal. It was understood that the Leaders of Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council had also received such invitations. This Council had also attended meetings with the local authorities in north Hampshire to explore options for future collaboration.

The Leader advised members that he would continue to take actions in the best interests of the whole District, maintaining a position that kept all options open. It remained the case that no decisions would be taken on any future deals or arrangements without it being a decision of all Councillors.

All members present indicated their support for this course of action.

60 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - FORECAST OUTTURN (BASED ON PERFORMANCE TO FEBRUARY 2016)

The Cabinet considered the Council's financial performance for the 11 month period to February 2016.

With respect to the general fund, further savings amounting to £960,000 had been achieved, while projects to the value of £1.991 million would be rephased to future years. Details of the key variations were set out in Section 3 of the report.

With respect to the capital programme, the vehicle and plant replacement programme had been delayed; while works to the North Milton Estate had been delayed by bad weather, resulting in £950,000 expenditure being rephased. The Housing Acquisitions and Development budget had been increased by a further £1.3 million to allow the purchase of additional properties and to take account of increases in property prices. The net effect was to increase the capital expenditure programme to £18.580 million.

An increased operational surplus against the Housing Revenue Account had also been identified, largely as a result of improvements to the vacant property turnaround times generating an additional £203,000 against the dwellings income budget. The projected annual surplus was now £1.549 million.

RESOLVED:

That the revised outturn forecasts for the General Fund (para 3.2 of Report Item 4 to the Cabinet), Capital Programme (para 4.1 of Report Item 4 to the Cabinet) and Housing Revenue Account (para 5.1 of Report Item 4 to the Cabinet) be noted.

61 LAND ACQUISITIONS AND DISPOSALS

The Cabinet considered exchanging the Council's land at Cranleigh Paddock, Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst for land currently in the County Council's ownership at Stocklands, Calmore Drive, Calmore, Totton, with a balancing payment to reflect the difference in value between the 2 properties. The land was identified in plans attached as Appendix 1 to Report Item 5 considered by the Cabinet. The market value of the 2 sites and of the works to bring the sites into condition for the exchange had been agreed by the Valuation sections of each authority. Each authority would meet its own transaction costs. The properties would be exchanged with vacant possession.

The County Council had already agreed to the proposed transfer.

The proposed land exchange offered benefits to both authorities. This Council would gain the opportunity to erect additional homes to meet local housing need.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council's land ownership at Cranleigh Paddock, Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst be declared as being surplus to requirements; and
- (b) That an Executive Head and/or Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Efficiency and Housing and Communities be authorised to finalise the terms and to enter into all necessary contracts to complete the sale of the Council's land at Cranleigh Paddock to Hampshire County Council and the acquisition of land at Stocklands, Calmore Drive, Calmore, Totton from the County Council in accordance with the principles set out in Report Item 5 to the Cabinet.

62 ST BARBE'S MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

The Cabinet was advised that the St Barbe's Trust had secured a grant of £1.8 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund as a contribution towards the cost of the planned refurbishment of the St Barbe's Museum and Art Gallery, Lymington. The total cost of the project was £2.345 million, with the Trust responsible for raising the balance from other sources. The building was owned by this Council and leased to the Trust on a peppercorn rent. The Council had awarded a revenue grant of £9,000 this year to support the Trust's delivery of the museum and art gallery. A revenue grant had been paid annually since 2006.

The Trust was seeking a capital grant of £65,000 from this Council, with the grant paid over a 2 year period. Confirmation of the award of the grant would secure consent from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project to commence.

The Cabinet noted that the Trust's business plan projected that the investment would increase visitor numbers and consequently income. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel had questioned whether this Council should therefore continue to pay an annual revenue grant, if this capital investment was made.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) ***That, should the Trust secure all the other sources of funding necessary for the project to proceed, a capital grant award of £65,000 be made to the St Barbe's Trust through the contribution grant application process as a contribution towards the cost of the planned development project that has attracted funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund; and***
- (b) ***That should be the capital grant be paid, it be agreed in principle that no future revenue support grants shall be paid.***

63 DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

- (a) That all Service Managers be authorised to make decisions and to take all necessary action which they were previously authorised to take in their roles prior to 1 March 2016; and
- (b) That, with effect from the date of this resolution, all Service Managers be authorised to take decisions and to take all necessary action that all Heads of Service were previously empowered to take, before such Heads of Service were appointed as Executive Heads.

CHAIRMAN