

6 JULY 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 6 July 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
P J Armstrong
G C Beck
Mrs S M Bennison
G R Blunden
Mrs F Carpenter
S J Clarke
S P Davies
Ms L C Ford
A T Glass
L E Harris

Councillors:

M R Harris
D Harrison
Mrs A J Hoare
Mrs M D Holding
L R Puttock
W S Rippon-Swaine
Mrs A M Rostand
Mrs C V Ward
M L White
C A Wise

Officers Attending:

R Jackson, R Beere, A Bethune, Miss J Debnam, C Elliott, Mrs L Evans,
Mrs S Hamilton, Mrs R Higgins, Mrs J McClay and Miss G O'Rourke

Apologies

None were received from Members of the Cabinet.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader referred to the recent referendum decision that the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. This was causing a considerable amount of turbulence at a National level and, until the situation became clearer, it was not possible to evaluate the implications this would have for local government. With respect to devolution, it was likely that this process would continue, but it was possible that there may be some delay, which would allow local authorities to take stock and develop options to bring maximum benefits for their local population. The Chief Executive would hold a briefing session on the current position with respect to devolution prior to the next meeting of the Council on 11 July 2016.

The implications for local authority funding would not become clear until later in the year, most probably through the Chancellor's autumn statement, and would be taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Plan once known.

In the meantime it was important that the Council continued to focus on delivering its own functions, the scope of which was often under-estimated by local residents. Members' attention was drawn to the recently published "Z" cards that set out key facts about the District and also the Corporate Plan.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Harrison – Minute 11

10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

11 REVOCATION OF TOTTON AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA

Cllr Harrison disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Totton and Eling Town Council which had been consulted on the proposed revocation.

The Air Quality Management Area in Totton had been declared in June 2005 to address the exceedance of the annual mean air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide in that area. Following the declaration of the Air Quality Management Area an Action Plan had been developed, in conjunction with partners, to address the source of the pollution, which was mainly from vehicles, particularly when stopped at the railway crossing in the centre of the town. The scope of the plan had been limited, because of the particular constraints associated with maintaining essential routes for pedestrians and vehicles. Nonetheless, there had been no exceedances of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide since the Action Plan was adopted in 2008. In accordance with best practice published by Defra, the Air Quality Management Area should now therefore be revoked.

It was intended to maintain the air quality real time monitoring station in Junction Road Totton and for the use of diffusion tubes to continue for the immediate future in case standards deteriorated.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Totton Air Quality Management Area, declared on the 6 June 2005 in respect of the exceedance of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide, be revoked; and
- (b) That the air quality real time monitoring station in Junction Road, Totton be maintained and monitoring continue using the real time monitoring station and diffusion tubes in Totton, for the immediate future, to reassure the public that nitrogen dioxide concentrations in Totton do not significantly increase once the Air Quality Management Area has been revoked.

12 NEW FOREST DISTRICT (OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL PARK) LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (PART 1) - PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PLANNING STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered the draft of the review of Part 1 of the Local Plan to cover the period up to 2036. Although the current local plan covered the period up to 2026 it pre-dated the Government's National Planning Policy Framework. Consequently, this Council had accepted that an early review should be undertaken.

The National Planning Policy Framework had significantly altered the way in which strategic planning for growth was undertaken, in particular boosting the supply of housing to meet the "objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area". As a consequence, this District must accommodate as much growth as possible without conflicting with the Framework's policies to protect certain areas, for example wildlife and nature conservation sites, the Green Belt and areas subject to flooding. Working with partner agencies where appropriate, a significant amount of research had therefore been undertaken to identify both potential sites for housing and to prioritise the constraints that might be set against that demand. The possible strategic site allocations were set out in paragraph 2.8 of the report. Members were advised that the total allocation should read 6,890, not 7,040 as stated.

The consultation exercise would allow the public the opportunity to respond to the draft proposals and also to put forward alternatives for consideration. To balance the needs of all the local population, the need and aspiration for affordable housing and good quality employment must be balanced against the protection of the special and unique character of the New Forest.

It was proposed that the consultation period would be extensive, from 15 July to 16 September, to allow the public adequate opportunity to respond. At this stage the public was being asked to respond to potential proposals for inclusion in the Local Plan. The Cabinet emphasised the valuable role that could be played by local ward councillors in encouraging local people to take part in this important consultation exercise, so that the views and priorities of local people could be reflected in the proposals that were included in the draft local plan that was brought forward for further consultation and eventually progressed through to public examination. This was a complex process with the potential for delays through the public examination process. It was important that an up-to-date plan was in place by 2018 in order that this Council remained in control of development in its area.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the document set out as Appendix 1 to report item 5 considered by the Cabinet be subject to final editing and published for the purpose of a public consultation to inform the preparation of the Local Plan Review Part 1;
- (b) That the Policy and Strategy Service Manager, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make editing changes in preparing the document for publication; and
- (c) That the public consultation period run from 15th July to 16th September 2016.

13 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL OUTTURN REPORT 2015/2016

The Cabinet reviewed the Council's performance on Treasury Management for the 2015/2016 financial year. While responsibility for treasury management remained with this Council, the County Council's Investments and Borrowing Team had been contracted to manage this operation since 2014. It was confirmed that the Council had complied with all of the prudential indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Council had achieved its strategy of maintaining its borrowing and investments below their underlying levels as measured by the Capital Financing Requirement. The majority of the loans held by the Council arose from the funding of the self-financing settlement for the Council's housing stock in March 2012. The Housing Revenue Account Capital Financial Requirement would reduce by £4.1 million per year from 2017/18 as repayments were made. There had been no new borrowing during 2015/16, with internal resources having been used to lower the overall treasury management risk by reducing both external debt and temporary investments. Long term debt continued to be managed to reduce costs while retaining certainty over debt repayments.

The Council's investment strategy had been adjusted to reflect the changing risks, increasingly favouring secured investment options or diversified alternatives, reducing exposure to unsecured bank and building society investments. It was confirmed that the Council had complied with its prudential and treasury management indicators.

The Cabinet was advised that the Audit Committee had noted the content of this report at their meeting on 28 June 2016.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management Report for 2015/16 be noted.

14 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016 ONWARDS

The Cabinet considered the further actions being taken to ensure that the Council delivered a balanced budget within the context of increasing financial constraints. It was proposed to take advantage of the Government's option to agree their financial settlement up to and including 2019/20 to take advantage of the increased financial certainty this would provide. The Council must publish an efficiency plan to meet the requirements of that option, and this was included as Appendix 1 to Report Item

7 considered by the Cabinet. This factor, together with the significant changes ahead due to the Business Rate Retention Scheme, meant that the Medium Term Plan now covered the next 3 years, instead of 4 years as previously. A number of assumptions had been made in drawing up the Plan, as summarised in section 3 of the report.

Current projections indicated there would be a total budget deficit of £4.074 million to 2020. The restructuring undertaken to date, together with additional target savings that would be met through the newly appointed Service Managers, would be supplemented by efficiency reviews with a view to yielding a further saving of £500,000 by 2020. This was likely to close the 2017/18 budget deficit, allowing the Council more time to implement the more major reviews necessary to close the remaining budget deficit. These major service reviews, identified in the Council's Delivery Plan, would contribute a further £1.136 million of savings by 2020.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) ***That the revised Medium Term Financial Plan and efficiency plan, as outlined within Report Item 7 to the Cabinet and Appendix 1 to that report, be adopted;***
- b) ***That the Government's offer of guaranteed funding levels up until 2020, through the publishing of the efficiency plan as laid out as Appendix 1 to Report Item 7 to the Cabinet, be accepted;***
- c) ***That the reporting timeline, as set out in section 7 of Report Item 7 to the Cabinet be agreed; and***
- d) ***That the actions and development of plans for options to support the Medium Term Financial Plan, as set out in the Report Item 7 to the Cabinet, be supported.***

CHAIRMAN