

17 NOVEMBER 2016

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in Committee Room 1, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Thursday, 17 November 2016

* Cllr M R Harris (Chairman)

* Cllr Mrs A M Rostand (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* A R Alvey
W G Andrews
M J Kendal
* Mrs A E McEvoy

Councillors:

* A D O'Sullivan
* M A Steele
* D B Tipp
* C A Wise

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

J D Heron, Portfolio Holder - Finance & Efficiency
B Rickman, Portfolio Holder - Leader

Officers Attending:

A Bethune, M Callaghan, Mrs R Drummond, C Elliott, A Rogers, Mrs M Sandhu and Mr R Stevens

Apologies:

Cllrs Andrews and Kendal

25 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

28 FUTURE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Panel received a report on the future work and priorities of the NFDC's Economic Development Team (ED).

It was noted that the Council's objectives for the new ED team will be set out in a Draft Strategic Economic Plan for the District, which would be shared with all partners and would include the following objectives:

- a. Support for the New Forest Business Partnership and expanded business sector engagement
- b. The development of a New Forest Business First public sector partnership that maximises the benefits for local business, including external investment.
- c. Support to key projects including:
 - i. Development of Fawley Power Station
 - ii. A31 Ringwood improvements
 - iii. Broadband
 - iv. Helping and encouraging local young entrepreneurs

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that the Panel supports the proposals for the future work of the Council's Economic Development Team as set out in the report.
- (b) That a progress report be brought to the Panel in May 2017.

29 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2017/18

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group concerning the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for those of working age on low income.

Members noted that minor adjustments had been made which brought the scheme into line with other government agencies, and the scheme had been operating well for a number of years.

The Council had a duty to consult on any changes to the scheme. The Council undertook a consultation exercise over a 6 week period. The consultation was advertised on the council's website, Facebook page, Twitter and on correspondence sent to recipients of a Council Tax Reduction. The major preceptors and Citizens Advice were also contacted. The council only received 15 responses. Due to the minimal responses it was not possible to draw any real conclusions. However, most responses broadly supported the recommendations.

The Panel supported the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet that the minimum contribution remains at 10% and that options, C, D, E, F, G and H be adopted as set out in the report.

30 FINANCIAL UPDATE 2016/17 AND 2017/18

The Panel noted the latest position with the 2016/17 budget, together with the assumptions for the 2017/18 budget and the Council's mid-year Treasury Management position.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel:

- a) note the contents of this report, and feedback any relevant comments for inclusion in the January MTFP report to Cabinet, and
- b) note the proposed schedule of future financial updates, as laid out in section 8 of the report.

31 KEY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Panel received an update on progress with various service reviews, as part of the regular monitoring of the corporate delivery plan.

In particular, it was noted that the Council's Building Control service was undergoing a review. It was the only regulatory service which was exposed to competition from the private sector. It was felt that the Council provided a better quality service than the private sector, but there were cost differences. Consideration was being given to joint provision with Southampton, Eastleigh and the Isle of Wight Councils, to reduce costs, make the service more resilient and achieve better response to customer demand. Further updates would be brought forward in due course.

It was noted that the £372,000 savings identified to date were annual and ongoing, and would contribute to the shortfall identified in the medium term financial plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered its future work programme.

It was agreed that a scoping report on the care sector be brought forward to the March meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

33 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES

The Finance and Efficiency Portfolio holder reported that the Council had recently been notified that pension fund costs had recently risen for all Hampshire councils, and for NFDC the increase was 1% per annum.

Cllr Heron explained that a report would be brought to the Panel at a special meeting in December, on a proposed approach to commercial property investment.

Cllr Rickman explained that the devolution discussions were still ongoing and the Chancellor's Autumn statement might clarify matters on future changes. The Building Control initiative to work jointly with neighbouring councils was a good example of the benefits of meeting with other councils during the devolution process.

Cllr Rickman looked forward to the report on the Care Sector in March as he felt this was a significant industry.

CHAIRMAN