

9 MARCH 2017

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in Committee Room 1, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Thursday, 9 March 2017

- * Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
- * Cllr Ms L C Ford (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * P J Armstrong
- * Ms R Bellows
- * G R Blunden
- * Mrs F Carpenter

Councillors:

- * A T Glass
- * J M Olliff-Cooper
- * D M S Poole
- Mrs B J Thorne

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs S M Bennison

Councillors:

E J Heron

Also In Attendance

Mr Janson – Hythe Sea Scouts

Officers Attending:

C Elliott, C Read, S Cook, Miss J Debnam, Mrs R Drummond, S Jones and R Lane

44 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs Bellows – Minute 52

46 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Panel noted comments by Mr Janson of Hythe Sea Scouts regarding their fund-raising to address the erosion of the foreshore at their site, which was undermining the boundary fence and threatening the Scout's building. Mr Janson expressed his gratitude for the technical assistance and advice being given to the Sea Scouts by the Council's officers.

47 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

Cllr E Heron, the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, reminded the Panel of the need for local councillor involvement in the continuing work to identify the sites that should be allocated in the current local plan review process. He emphasised the need to respond to consultations and to advise the Portfolio Holder of any site-specific concerns that they may have at this stage, before the proposals were finalised.

48 HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT (HECA)

The Panel considered the Home Energy Conservation Act report, which was produced on a biannual basis for publication on the Council's website and for submission to Government. The proposed report was attached as Appendix 1 to report item 5 considered by the Cabinet.

The Panel was pleased to note that this District had exceeded the targets for reducing CO2 emissions; with gas and electricity consumption showing a steady decrease. Fuel poverty in the District was slightly lower than the Hampshire average.

The Panel was advised that Government policy had changed away from direct incentives for local authorities to invest in low carbon power generation or energy saving measures. The increasing privatisation of activities meant the Council's role was now mainly in the collection and collation of statistical information.

RESOLVED:

That the Home Energy Conservation Act report attached as Appendix 1 to Report Item 5 considered by the Panel, be commended to the Portfolio Holder for approval for submission to the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and for publication on the Council's website.

49 COASTAL FUNDING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Panel was advised that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group would be held in early April to be briefed by Wes Jones from the Environment Agency who was their Flooding and Coastal Risk Management Funding Manager. He would brief the Group on potential options, drawing on his experience with what other Authorities were doing. These included funding through Local Enterprise Partnerships or the Heritage Lottery Fund; and the use of long term loans through the Public Works Loans Board,

50 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SERVICE

The Panel was advised that the Council had entered into a new Traffic Management Agency Agreement with the County, based on the County Council's funding being reduced to £40,000 per annum from next year. The County had previously paid £100,000 for this service. While there was slight flexibility in the work the Council could do, the County were clear that their funding should be used to meet their priority of works to achieve casualty reduction.

The reduced level of funding would not allow the re-introduction of locally based traffic management meetings, although it was recognised that these had been valued by local communities. The Portfolio Holder, together with the Executive

Head, were currently considering options for consulting with local communities and would welcome suggestions from Panel members. The Portfolio Holder would advise interested parties of the new arrangements once these had been finalised.

51 PLANNING POLICY UPDATE

The Panel was advised that work to progress the outcome of the first round of consultations on options for inclusion in the Local Plan were continuing. It was expected that the document that would form the basis for consultations, prior to submission to the Secretary of State for Examination, would be considered by the Cabinet in September, following its consideration by this Panel and the Planning Development Control Committee, probably through a special joint meeting in July. There would be a 6 week consultation in the autumn. It was hoped the Examination would be held in the early part of 2018.

52 HOUSING WHITE PAPER

Cllr Bellows disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Council tenant. She concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent her from remaining in the meeting to speak and to vote.

The Panel received a detailed analysis of the potential implications of the Government's Housing White Paper, and considered the comments they may wish to make to the Portfolio Holders to inform their response to this consultation.

The Panel noted the analyses put forward by the Executive Head with respect to each of the main proposals. They concurred with the view that many of the proposals had some merit and could be supported. There remained concerns about a number of issues however.

While local authorities were not permitted to benefit from the receipts from council house purchases under the Right to Buy legislation they would remain significantly hampered in providing replacements to maintain their housing stock to serve local people. This was doubly unfair when the Council had recently had to take out a significant loan to buy its own Council housing stock from the Government. The Panel urged all members to write to their Member of Parliament to request them to seek a solution to this concern.

Members were advised that this Council would shortly take delivery of 17 starter homes on the Merrifield Estate at Bransgore, which would be made available to 17 families who had been identified with local connections. The Council had managed to resolve technical considerations that allowed the new occupiers to obtain a mortgage for the purchase of the properties. As far as was known, this was the first local authority in the country to deliver Starter Homes under the Government's new initiative that classified them as part of the affordable housing provision.

The Panel was advised that the Council had received £976,000 Government funding under their community housing initiative, whereby rural communities could establish a trust to provide housing for local people. The initial funding to this Council was to help establish the scheme. A report would be considered by the Cabinet in the near future on how to progress this scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the portfolio holders be advised of the Panel's comments, as set out above.

53 BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

The Panel was advised that discussions on the proposed partnership with Southampton City Council and Eastleigh Borough Council for the provision of a joint building control service had not been fruitful. While options for forming a different partnership would continue to be kept under review, it was currently intended to keep the service in-house, but subject to an immediate service review.

54 KEY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME - UPDATE REPORT

The Panel was updated on progress against the key actions and reviews that were included in the delivery plan for 2016/17.

With respect to the review of the Environmental Health Service, the new structure had been agreed, following consultations with employees, and recruitment to the senior management posts was underway.

The report to HLOWLA on the Project Integra review of waste and recycling, including the cost analysis of the viability of refitting the Materials Recycling Facilities to accept plastic pots, tubs and trays, was expected at the end of March 2017.

It was anticipated that the review of enforcement activity, to use visible officers to better effect, would start shortly.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made be noted.

55 CEMETERIES REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Panel considered proposed revisions to the Cemeteries Regulations and scheme for the Registration of Stonemasons and Funeral Directors to control operations within the Council's cemeteries. The proposed documents had been subject to consultation, including with local companies.

The Panel welcomed the revised Regulations for the operation of the Council's Cemeteries and updated scheme for the Registration of Stonemasons and Funeral Directors. The Panel was grateful for the detailed work undertaken by the Cemeteries Task and Finish Group which had worked closely with the officers to produce the revised documents. The Panel considered that the revised Regulations were comprehensive and would give greater clarity about what was, and was not, permitted.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Cemeteries Regulations and scheme for the Registration of Stonemasons and Monumental Mason be commended to the Cabinet for approval.

56 WORK PROGRAMME**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes be approved to guide the Panel's activities over the coming months.

CHAIRMAN

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WORK PROGRAMME

June 2017
Tree Management Strategy – Review of operation (SJ)
Bring Bank Review – report of Task and Finish Group (RB)
Coastal Funding Task and Finish Group – oral update on progress (SC)
Planning Policy Update (CJE/LE)
Grass Cutting Arrangements (CR)
Not possible to timetable yet
Report of Kerbside Glass Collection Group on text messaging alerts and promotion (CR)
Appoint Task and Finish Working Group to work on the Council's waste Management Strategy (CR)
Project Integra – Review of materials/plastics collected for Recycling (CR)
Implications of Regulations for Litter Picking on roads (CR)
Appoint task and finish group to look at fuel/emission efficient vehicles for the Council's fleet. (CR)
Flytipping – report on policy for complaints/ enforcement and priority assigned to it (CR)
Nuisance – Policy on investigations and enforcement (joint with Community Panel) (CG/CR)
Environmental Health – review of delivery of the environmental health functions (GO/JM)
Waste and recycling – developing strategy in line with the Project Integra review (CR/RB)
Enforcement Activity (Streetscene) – identifying opportunities for joining up enforcement activities of visible officers.(CR)
Report of Planning Fees Task and Finish Group (DG)

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