

**5 JULY 2017**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 5 July 2017

- \* 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
- W G Andrews
- P J Armstrong
- G C Beck
- Mrs S M Bennison
- G R Blunden
- S J Clarke
- Ms L C Ford
- A T Glass
- L E Harris
- D Harrison

**Councillors:**

- M J Kendal
- A D O'Sullivan
- A K Penson
- L R Puttock
- W S Rippon-Swaine
- Mrs A M Rostand
- D N Tungate
- Mrs C V Ward
- M L White
- C A Wise

**Also In Attendance:**

Mr A Dabson – for Item 4

**Officers Attending:**

R Jackson, Mrs F Churchill, Miss G O'Rourke, C Read, Mrs M Sandhu, Mrs J Bailey, A Bethune, Miss J Debnam, Mrs R Drummond, R Topliss, Ms S White and Mrs K Williams

**Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Beeton.

**1 LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader expressed the Council's sadness at the recent tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London, with everyone's thoughts being with the friends and families of those affected. He also praised the emergency services, who continued to work to protect and help everyone in the community.

The Leader reassured everyone that the Council continued to regularly review fire risk assessments for its buildings, as well as the servicing and maintenance programmes, to ensure that people remained safe. The Council was also working to ensure that the advice offered to residents and other users of the Council's buildings was appropriate and was understood, particularly with respect to evacuation procedures in the event of fire or other emergency. The Leader advised Members that this Council was not directly responsible for any properties over 3 storeys in height in this District.

The Council would continue to work with partners in the Fire and Rescue Service and with other organisations such as the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that the Council continued to prioritise safety by ensuring that any new and emerging guidance and Regulations were followed.

## **2 MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Kendal – minutes 4 and 9.

## **4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Cllr Kendal disclosed a pecuniary interest as a nearby resident and having left the meeting took no part in the consideration.

The Cabinet noted the petition that had been presented by Mr A Dabson in respect of potential proposals for a children's play area on the sea front at Milford on Sea.

The Leader advised the Cabinet and Mr Dabson that, at present, there were no proposals before the Council for consideration. Once any such proposals had been received, the petition would be taken into consideration.

## **5 NEW HOUSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY (DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS)**

The Cabinet considered amendments to the Housing Financial Assistance Policy for disabled adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants and for essential repairs for vulnerable home owners through Home Repair Loans. Additional funding was now available through the County Council's Better Care Fund as well as through this Council's Housing Revenue Account.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants were available to assist disabled adults and children to adapt their homes to increase their independence. These grants were available regardless of the tenure of the property. For adults the grants were means tested, for children they were not. While the works that could be carried out to qualify for a mandatory grant were specifically defined in the legislation, there was scope for local authorities to offer discretionary grants, although to date money had not been available for this purpose. The Council now also had a limited budget for Home Repair Loans for vulnerable owner occupiers.

The additional funding available through the Better Care Fund allowed greater discretion for local authorities to assist disabled residents to improve their health wellbeing and to remain living independently in their communities. A range of discretionary assistance would be offered in future and the proposed amendments to the policy should allow this Council to make better use of the funding available to assist disabled and vulnerable residents. The Council would also continue to provide a budget to for Home Repair Loans for vulnerable homeowners.

The opportunity had also been taken to review the system to overcome blockages and delays in responding to requests for assistance.

In welcoming the revisions to the policy, the Portfolio Holder paid particular tribute to the late Tony Elsbury, who had been instrumental in developing these proposals.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the new Housing Financial Assistance Policy, as set out in Report Item 4 to the Cabinet, be approved;
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Housing Grants and Improvements Manager to implement the policy details and make all necessary arrangements and decisions in compliance with this new policy (within the agreed budgetary constraints); and
- (c) That authority be delegated to the Service Manager to exercise discretion within the existing budgetary constraints in exceptional circumstances for specific cases, including making decisions regarding the waiving of the first £5000 of the client's contribution towards the cost of a Disabled Facilities Grant project.

**6 DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE**

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which had appointed a Task and Finish Group to review the performance of Mytime Active at the end of the first 5 years of the 30 year contract to run Dibden Golf Centre. The Task and Finish Group had undertaken extensive research, including visiting the Golf Centre and meeting with representatives of the users; as well as with Mytime Active. Proposals for the rent to be charged for the next 5 years of the contract had also been developed and submitted to Mytime Active for consideration, and formed part of the Group's recommendations to the Panel.

The Group had been concerned that the investment programme for the first 5 years of the contract had not been fulfilled, and a number of repairs, for example to the fencing and road surfacing, were outstanding. Since the Group's visit to the site repairs had been carried out, and assurance had been received that there would be £558,800 investment in the Golf Centre over the next five years. The Cabinet concurred with the Group's conclusion that a more pro-active relationship was necessary between this Council and Mytime Active to monitor performance, and that, in future quarterly meetings should be held with the officers and the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, with the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewing performance on an annual basis. In addition, the officers would attend future user group meetings to assist and promote communications between them and Mytime Active.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the rental for Dibden Golf Course be fixed at £152,471 per annum from 27 April 2017 for the next five year period of the contract;
- (b) That the Council does not claim back the National Non Domestic Rate entitlement of £4,000 for 2017/18; and
- (c) That the Council review the National Non Domestic Rate entitlement claim on an annual basis.

**7 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT 2016/17**

The Cabinet considered the Council's performance against the delivery of "Our corporate plan" over the last 12 months and also the provisional financial outturn position for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme for 2016/17. The key delivery actions for 2017/18 were also updated.

The provisional outturn for the General Fund for the year showed an overall saving of £3.084 million against a budget of £17,192 million, with significant savings and rephasings also being made against the Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account.

The focus remained on maintaining the delivery of front line services and the Council's achievements and key data for 2016/17 were set out in Appendix 1 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet. The key actions for delivery of the corporate plan in 2017/18 were set out in Appendix 2.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the performance and achievements for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be noted;
- (b) That the key delivery actions for 2017/18, as set out in Appendix 2 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be noted;
- (c) That the provisional General Fund outturn position, as set out in Appendix 3 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be noted;
- (d) That the provisional outturn position of the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 3 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be noted; and
- (e) That the provisional outturn position of the Housing Revenue Account, as set out in Appendix 3 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be noted.

**8 RINGWOOD PROJECT**

The Cabinet was advised that proposed improvements to the gym and spin studio at the Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre had been amended to be compliant with planning permission and building regulations. In particular, it had become necessary to provide an additional, safe, evacuation route in the event of fire.

The procurement process had established that the additional works required would cost £162,300. Time was critical in implementing the project to avoid loss of income and potential disruption to Ringwood School, which was a major user of the centre. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That financial regulations be suspended and that the Section 151 Officer be authorised to approve the additional spend of £162,300 on this project.

**9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL OUTTURN REPORT**

Cllr Kendal disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Hampshire County Council which undertook the contract for the treasury management function. He concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak. He did not have a vote.

The Cabinet considered the annual report on the performance of the Treasury Management Function during 2016/17. This Council's treasury management function was now managed by the County Council's Investments and Borrowing Team, which allowed access to a wider range of investment opportunities.

The report set out the external and internal contexts within which the Council's borrowing and investment strategies were operating.

The majority of the Council's borrowing continued to be through the Public Works Loans Board which provided the best balance of providing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which the funds were required. No new borrowing had taken place in 2016/17 and the majority of the Council's debt continued to be the loan for the resettlement of the Housing Revenue Account, for the repurchase of the Council's housing stock. As the premium charged for the early repayment of debt to the Public Works Loans Board remained relatively expensive, there had been not rescheduling of debt in 2016/17.

The Council's investment strategy had reflected changes in the risk of unsecured bank and building society deposits and had sought to achieve an appropriate balance between risk and return. The Council's treasury advisers, Arlingclose, continued to provide support and advice, monitoring performance with respect to the Council's investment objectives. The Council's average cash balance in 2016/17 had been £70.1 million, achieving an average yield of 0.96%, compared to 0.91% in 2015/16.

It was noted that it had been confirmed that the Council had complied with its Prudential Indicators for 2016/17.

**RESOLVED:**

That the performance of the treasury management function, as set out in Report Item 8 to the Cabinet, be noted.

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the revised prudential indicators for 2017/18-2018/19, set out in Appendix 1 to report Item 8 to the Cabinet, be approved.***

**10 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2017 ONWARDS**

The Cabinet considered revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan. Their attention was drawn to a number of significant changes since February, when this issue had last been considered (minute 57 refers). Of particular note was that the Bill to reform local government funding, including the 100% retention of business rates, was now effectively suspended, with no plans for its introduction. The overall "Fair Funding" review would continue, but the Department of Communities and Local Government was reconsidering the issue of 100% retention. The Council's budgets would need to evolve as the Fair Funding review took shape. To date the budget reflected good performance in the Business Rate Collection Fund with a surplus equivalent to £373,000. For the future, the budgets would need to reflect the loss of Revenue Support Grant by 2019/20 and the likely loss of New Homes Bonus as a reliable funding stream, and which would probably cease entirely by 2021/22.

The Cabinet was updated on the budget stabilisation strategy, forecast budget deficit and the actions required over the period to 2022. Five key action points were set out in paragraph 5.6 of Report Item 9 to the Cabinet.

It was agreed that information of the proportion of employment costs associated with the Council's pension contributions would be sent to Cllr Penson.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) ***That the revised Medium Term Financial Plan, as outlined within Report Item 9 to the Cabinet and its Appendix 1, be adopted;***
- (b) ***That the reporting timeline set out in section 6 of Report Item 9 to the Cabinet be agreed; and***
- (c) ***That consideration of the Council's organisational business model and plans for options to support the Medium Term Financial Plan, as set out in Report Item 9 to the Cabinet, be progressed.***

**11 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS****RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Cllrs Binns, Crisell and Thorne be appointed to serve on the Forest Lodge Home Farm Quarry Liaison Panel; and
- (b) That Cllr Jeremy Heron and Mr Andrew Smith, solicitor, be appointed as additional directors of New Forest Enterprise Centre Ltd.

CHAIRMAN