

2 AUGUST 2017

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Wednesday, 2 August 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 S M Bennison

G R Blunden

S P Davies

Ms L C Ford

A T Glass

L E Harris

M R Harris

D Harrison

Councillors:

Mrs A J Hoare

Mrs M D Holding

W S Rippon-Swaine

Mrs A M Rostand

D N Tungate

Mrs C V Ward

C A Wise

Also In Attendance:

Mrs Jennie Savage

Officers Attending:

R Jackson, Mrs F Churchill, Miss G O'Rourke, C Read, A Bethune, M Callaghan, Miss J Debnam, Mrs S Hamilton and Mrs R Rutins

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Beeton.

12 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed pupils from Milford on Sea Primary School who were present in support of the presentation of a petition.

The Leader thanked all the officers and Members who had been involved in the District Council's stand at the New Forest Show. The stand had been particularly vibrant and engaging.

13 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Ford, E J Heron, J D Heron, Rippon-Swaine – Minute 17
Cllrs E J Heron, Harrison – Minute 19

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Cabinet noted the petition that had been presented by Mrs J Savage in respect of the need for an additional children's play area, catering for a wider age group than toddlers, on the sea front at Milford on Sea.

The Leader advised the Cabinet and Mrs Savage that the Council had now received a proposal from Milford on Sea Parish Council and once all the necessary information had been gathered a report would be brought back to the Cabinet and to the Council.

16 STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS - "HELPING LOCAL BUSINESS GROW"

The Cabinet welcomed and considered a draft strategy to guide the Council's activities to meet the corporate priority of "Helping Local Business Grow". It was opportune to review the Strategy as organisations such as the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership were also reviewing their strategies, and preparation of the Council's own local plan, setting the background for achieving prosperity over the next 20 years, was progressing. The draft Strategy was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

It was important that the Council had a clear strategy in place to allow advantage to be taken of the opportunities that were available for promoting economic and business success and to ensure that the right policy responses were in place for planning, transport, housing and skills.

In addition to the objectives set out in the draft Strategy, Members considered that the improvement of business productivity should be widened to include the maximisation of export opportunities; and that there should be an additional objective of improving the earnings of those people at the lower end of the pay scales.

It was also noted that access to high speed broadband was essential for the growth of small businesses and this was an issue that could usefully be addressed in the developing review of the Local Plan.

Members asked that a progress report be submitted to the Cabinet in about 6 months' time.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, subject to the amendment of the objectives in the Strategy, as set out above, the draft Strategy for Business, attached as Appendix 1 to Report Item 4 to the Cabinet; be approved to form the basis for consultation with the New Forest Business Partnership and other relevant partners; prior to it being reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the light of the responses received; and
- (b) That a progress report be submitted to the Cabinet in about 6 months' time.

17 A31 IMPROVEMENTS - RINGWOOD

Cllrs Ford, J D Heron and Rippon-Swaine disclosed non-pecuniary interests as members of Ringwood Town Council which was involved in negotiations on the proposals under consultation. Cllr E J Heron disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Hampshire County Council which was a party to the proposals, and also on the grounds that he lived close to the A31 in Ringwood. They each concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent them from remaining in the meeting to speak and to vote,

The Cabinet considered the response to be made with respect to Highways England's consultation on proposals to improve the A31 at Ringwood between the A338/B3347 (Ringwood) and the B3081 (Verwood) junctions.

The proposal contained a number of elements including the addition of a third lane along the A31 westbound and the closure of the West Street access to the A31. While there were some concerns about the limited scale of the measures on offer and that some more fundamental causative issues were being left unaddressed, Members concluded that, in a time of financial constraint it was important to be realistic about the scope of what could be achieved within the budget available, in order to achieve some improvement. Members considered that this Council should support proposals that would improve traffic flows in this area and encourage Highways England to work closely with local communities, in particular Ringwood Town Council, to achieve the best possible scheme. At present congestion levels were growing, with a detrimental effect on businesses throughout the District, because of the importance of this strategic route to the West Country and the regional airports. In addition, local people were increasingly diverting their journeys onto smaller forest roads, affecting the environment and increasing the risk of animal accidents.

The Cabinet encouraged the public and interested parties to respond to Highways England's consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the letter of support set out at Appendix 2 to Report Item 5 to the Cabinet, be sent to Highways England in respect of their consultation on improvements to the A31.

18 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - BASED ON PERFORMANCE TO JULY 2017

The Cabinet was updated on performance on the Council's budgets to July 2017.

A number of changes had been identified with respect to the General Fund with savings and additional income of £499,000, offset by new requirements of £567,000, of which £150,000 would be funded from an earmarked reserve. Rephasings from 2016/17 into the current year, to the value of £1.146 million, would also be funded from earmarked reserves. The General Fund budget, as a consequence, had reduced to £16.505 million. Further details of the changes were set out in section 3 of the report. This included a new budget requirement that had not been previously identified, for the replacement of the boilers at Lymington Town Hall.

Capital expenditure had increased to £23.002 million to reflect net budget reductions and the rephasing of schemes from 2016/17, with further details set out in section 4 of the report.

No adjustments had been identified on the Housing Revenue Account budget, which continued to be managed on a break-even basis.

RESOLVED:

That the latest budget forecasts for the General Fund, Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account, as set out in paragraphs 3.2, 4.1 and 5.1 of Report Item 6 to the Cabinet be noted.

RECOMMENDED:

That the new budget requirement of £80,000 for the replacement of the boilers at Lymington Town Hall, as set out in paragraph 3.4 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be approved.

19 "SERVING HAMPSHIRE - BALANCING THE BUDGET" - RESPONSE TO HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION

Cllrs E. J Heron and Harrison disclosed non-pecuniary interests as members of Hampshire County Council which was undertaking the consultation. They each concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent them from remaining in the meeting to speak and to vote.

The Cabinet considered the response to be made with respect to the County Council's high level consultation on options for balancing its budget.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council be advised of the following response in respect of their consultation "Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget":

- (i) This Council acknowledges the difficult financial position faced by the County Council and others in local government at this time;
- (ii) It is noted that this stage of the County Council's budget consultation is very high level. It is not therefore possible to comment on the likely impact on specific areas of our community as they are not known. However, when the County Council is proposing to make specific changes to services it is requested that the views and knowledge of local people, including the district council, are sought prior to any formal decisions being taken.

- (iii) From an operational perspective this Council is keen to explore the opportunities to work in partnership with the County Council in order to explore where tangible benefits to both local authorities can be delivered, including in areas that may generate new sources of income.

20 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Cabinet considered the appointment of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the following persons be appointed to serve on the Panel for 4 years with effect from 1 October 2017

- Dr Declan Hall – former academic and now self-employed Local Government consultant, specialising in members' allowances
- Di Roberts, CBE – Principal and Chief Executive of Brockenhurst College
- Gerald Lewis – former local government employee, former parish councillor and current volunteer Chairman of the New Forest "LEADER" Rural Development Grants Programme

21 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT

RESOLVED:

That Cllr M Harris be appointed as a substitute representative on the South East Employers Organisation, in place of Cllr Kendal.

CHAIRMAN