

**18 JANUARY 2018**

**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, 18 January 2018

**Councillors:**

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

**Councillors:**

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

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

B Rickman, Leader & Corporate Affairs Portfolio Holder  
M R Harris, Local Economic Development, Property & Innovation Portfolio Holder  
J D Heron, Finance, Corporate Services & Improvement Portfolio Holder  
G R Blunden, (for Item 8)  
S P Davies  
J G Ward

**Officers Attending:**

A Bethune, C Read, A Rogers and Mrs R Rutins

**Apologies:**

Cllr Mrs McEvoy

**33 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:**

That Cllr Steele be elected Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

**34 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:**

That Cllr Penson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

**35 MINUTES****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr O' Sullivan disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 (Citizens' Advice New Forest – Review of Grant) (Minute 40)

**37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

**38 ELECTORAL REVIEW**

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Electoral Review Task and Finish Group on a possible reduction in the number of Members on the District Council.

Cllr Ward introduced the report as Chairman of the Electoral Review Task and Finish Group. He reminded members that the issue of reducing the membership of the Council had been debated several times over recent years. He expressed the view that the recommended reduction to approximately 48 members should be the maximum number, as he personally favoured a lower number. Previous attempts to propose a reduction to around 40 had not been agreed by members. He pointed out that some members of the current Task and Finish Group were in favour of no change, but the consensus had been for the reduction as recommended.

The Panel noted that, in the table at paragraph 2.7 of the report, the member / elector ratio for NFDC, based on the current 60 members, should read 1: 2423, by 2023, and not 2023 as shown in the report.

The Panel was advised that if the Council agreed to apply to the Boundary Commission for a reduction, the first step would be for Commission representatives to meet with the Chief Executive and the Leader, to confirm the Council's commitment to what was a complex process and the related resource requirements. There was insufficient time for implementation by the next election in 2019, meaning that any changes would not have effect until 2023.

Members asked whether the changes would involve consequential adjustments to parish ward boundaries and were advised that this was a possibility.

It was also confirmed that once an application for a review was made, the matter would be in the hands of the Boundary Commission, and not the Council, to decide.. However members were advised that if councils submitted well - reasoned schemes, they tended to be accepted by the Commission.

Cllr Ward explained that the Task and Finish Group had now finished its work, but could be re-constituted if necessary, to assist officers on the detailed proposals.

The Panel Chairman thanked Cllr Ward, the Task & Finish Group, and officers for the considerable work undertaken in progressing the matter.

**RESOLVED:**

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be requested to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements in New Forest District Council, with a view to reducing the number of Members on the Council from 60 to approximately 48.

[Cllr Alvey abstained from voting]

**39 BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Budget Task and Finish Group.

The Group had reviewed Council performance as well as holding meetings with the Portfolio Holders in November 2017. (Members paid tribute to former councillor and Cabinet Member, Mrs Sophie Beeton, who had recently passed away following a long illness.)

The Group had noted good progress on some of last year's recommendations, but emphasised the need for timely action on reducing expenditure and pursuing transformative initiatives, with the minimum of delay.

The Group had suggested that an update be brought to the May Panel meeting on progress with each of its recommendations.

In answer to a question on the running costs of the Leisure Centres, it was noted that the quoted £600k operating deficit was in addition to the £700k annual investment and maintenance costs, bringing the overall annual expenditure to £1.3m, in addition to corporate charges.

The Panel was pleased to note that the former head of Project Integra, Mr Chris Noble, would be joining the Council in February as the new Waste and Recycling Manager.

The Chairman thanked Task and Finish Group members and officers for their efforts in undertaking the review and bringing the report forward.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel be updated at their 25 May 2018 meeting on progress with the following recommendations:-

- i. That measures be brought forward in a timely manner to eliminate the £600k deficit relating to Leisure Centre provision, either through private provision, through a charitable trust, or other means, perhaps identified by consultants, (subject to clear objectives at the outset on elimination of the deficit);.
- ii. That ways to seek additional funding for CCTV be revisited;
- iii. That a Homelessness Task and Finish Group be created to investigate the matters outlined in the report to the Panel;
- iv. That the Council continue to work with Citizens' Advice New Forest on Universal Credit;

- v. That regular updates be brought to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on progress with partnership / collaborations, in particular the Planning function, with the NPA (or other authorities if no progress can be made), with positive timelines and definitive plans;
- vi. That the Council investigates other optional future waste management strategies, to seek greater efficiencies;
- vii. That efforts be made to enhance education on recycling, and to increase performance on recycling rates;
- viii. That a report be brought to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the pension deficit and options on how this might be tackled;
- ix. That a plan for smarter working be submitted to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- x. That measures to improve competitiveness of the Building Control function through use of new technology be investigated; and
- xi. That an update report on progress with the Transportation function SLA with HCC be submitted to the relevant overview and scrutiny panel

#### **40 CITIZENS' ADVICE NEW FOREST (CANF) - REVIEW OF GRANT**

Cllr O'Sullivan disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as the Council's representative on CANF, in relation to his employment with the Gryphon Trust, of which the Chief Executive of CANF was a member. He did not participate in the in the discussion and did not vote.

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Citizens' Advice New Forest (CANF) Task and Finish Group on a review of the annual grant given by the Council to CANF, which in 2017/18 was £255,000.

Cllr Davies, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, explained that the Group had met 3 times and had interviewed CANF representatives, including the CANF Chief Executive. Cllr Davies explained that, whilst both the community and the Council greatly appreciated the work of CANF, the current grant of £255k was a significant cost to the Authority, given financial pressures. It was therefore necessary to explore alternative delivery models with CANF, with a view to signing a rolling 3 year service level agreement with the Council from 2019/20, with agreed grant reductions.

It was noted that efficiencies were expected to come from rationalisation of accommodation and use of new technology, but as these matters needed time to implement, it was important to honour the current financial commitment and maintain the grant at the same level for 2018/19. CANF's overall costs were £290k. Future Council funding would be based largely on progress with accommodation, and on the extra work CANF was likely to undertake arising from Universal Credit, and accordingly the Task and Finish Group would continue to work to CANF through 2018 to oversee the transition to a new business model and to agree the SLA.

**RESOLVED:**

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet that the Council's grant to Citizens' Advice New Forest 2018/19 be set at the same level as 2017/18, ie £255,000.

**41 SERVICE REVIEW UPDATE**

The Panel noted an update on the work being undertaken as part of the regular monitoring of the Corporate Delivery Plan.

Members were advised that future reports would refocus on progress against the strategic framework and would be brought forward in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

That the updates contained within the report be noted.

**42 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted its future Work Programme.

**43 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES**

The Panel received updates from Portfolio Holders on various issues.

Cllr Harris reported on the various matters which he had been involved with in his first 10 weeks as Cabinet Member:

- Working with officers on the Economic Development Strategy, which would come to the Panel in March.
- Promoting improvements to Broadband provision in the District in collaboration with HCC.
- Successful acquisition of a property as part of the Council's Property Investment Strategy, and related revenue. (He stressed that the purchase had been made using Council funds, rather than through borrowing.)
- Supporting initiatives for housing for all within the District.
- Involvement with the production of a 4 minute film promoting film making in the New Forest, in association with Film New Forest.
- Promotion of agriculture and forestry in the New Forest as valuable local industries.
- Meeting Government representatives concerning protection of tree species in the Forest.
- Raising awareness among the local business community, concerning the Council's new procurement regime and how they could access it

- He proposed to again lobby the New Forest's local MP's on the adverse impact of the Right To Buy legislation
- Forthcoming informal discussions with officers on potential application of the John Lewis Model of employee ownership.

Cllr Rickman had also been involved in a number of the above issues as well as:

- The recent successful ministerial visit regarding air quality and other local issues.
- Promotion of electric vehicles

CHAIRMAN