

18 SEPTEMBER 2018

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in The Bradbury Room, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Tuesday, 18 September 2018

* Cllr G R Blunden (Chairman)

* Cllr Mrs F Carpenter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* G C Beck
* D A Britton
* S J Clarke
* I C Coombes

Councillors:

* A H G Davis
* A D O'Sullivan
* D J Russell
* M L White

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Mrs D E Andrews, Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs
W G Andrews
Mrs S M Bennison
J E Binns, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing

Officers Attending:

Mrs J Bailey, Mrs R Drummond, Mrs S Hamilton, C Read, A Rogers and Mrs M Sandhu

17 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 19 June 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr O'Sullivan disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as Chief Executive Officer of the Gryphon Trust, which encompasses Arnewood School, which uses New Milton Leisure Centre.

19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

20 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

Cllr Mrs D Andrews, the Community Affairs Portfolio Holder, reminded members that the Task and Finish Group dealing with Community Grants would be meeting soon, and reporting to the January Panel meeting.

Cllr Andrews explained that the parish councils had for some years paid £732.00 per year per camera as a contribution to the District Council's CCTV costs. It was intended that this arrangement would be formalised in a Partnership Agreement which had been circulated among parish councils. Once they had signed up to the Agreement as part of a wider community safety initiative, the fee would be reviewed on an annual basis.

It was explained that the CCTV Room was to be relocated to the basement area of Appletree Court. Officers were investigating procurement options for the provision of re-deployable cameras, and it was hoped that a trial would be undertaken in due course. It was explained that there had been a significant increase in the uptake of Careline Fall Detectors offered as part of the overall Careline package.

Cllr Andrews reported that a Safer New Forest Conference would be held at Brockenhurst College on 15 November 2018, bringing together community safety professionals from all over the District.

Cllr Binns, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, referred to the Leisure Review at item 5 of the agenda and thanked Cllr Steve Clarke for chairing the Group and the progress made to date. Contact had been made with schools to keep them abreast of the situation. Cllr Binns reported that phase 1 of the operational review had been completed, a single Management Team with 1 Service Manager and 2 Multi-Centre Managers is now in place. Feedback so far was positive. Phase 2 of the review was ongoing into October.

A number of themes had been identified to deliver the Service Operational Plan, each of which included real savings or income generation that would contribute towards closing the operational funding gap.

Cllr Binns also detailed progress on the roof work to New Milton Health & Leisure Centre which was due to finish in October and was likely to come in under budget.

Tenders for the Applemore Pre-School had been received on 13 September. This had yet to be evaluated.

Details were given of the 'Pop-Up Road Show', where families enjoyed various activities across the Forest during the summer, had attracted more than 1,500 people. Free activity days included many activities and ran 1 day a week throughout August at five recreation grounds across the District.

Cllr Binns also reported on the #ThisGirlCan national Sport England Initiative which aimed to encourage more women to be active in the Forest. The New Forest had the biggest gap in activity levels between men and women in Hampshire, with men being amongst the most active in the county, women the least.

On the Recreational Management Strategy, the Portfolio Holder felt the timing was appropriate to set up a steering group to advise him on the Council's approach to the NPA's proposals for the Recreational Management Strategy. The group would help inform the Portfolio Holder on appropriate recommendations to the December Cabinet meeting. It was agreed that all members be emailed to seek volunteers to sit on the group.

Dibden Golf Centre Working Group – Chairman's Update

Cllr B Andrews, Chairman of the Dibden Golf Centre Working Group gave an update on the meeting of the Group held on 4 September.

The Dibden Golf Centre Working Group last met on 4 September.

Improvements have been made with the liaison arrangements between NFDC and MyTime, with the Council's Open Spaces Service Manager (Steve Jones) now monitoring progress.

He and his experienced team were providing advice and guidance on grounds maintenance, as well as assisting with equipment resources.

It was intended to revisit the contract with MyTime, to ensure there was greater clarity on respective responsibilities for maintenance of the facility. It had also been agreed that MyTime will play a more prominent role in meetings with their user groups so that they have full accountability to their customers.

The clubhouse roof was shortly to be replaced, and discussions were ongoing regarding various schemes, eg to improve the appearance of the facility, including the car park and access road, the future location of the Pro Shop, and use of the related building. The aim was to continue to make full use of the location, its grounds and buildings, to make it an ever-more attractive place, both for golf users and for functions, and to improve income.

The Group will meet again with MyTime representatives in 6 months' time.

Cllr Andrews was specially grateful personally and on behalf of the Working Group to Colin Read for all his work and support in turning this partnership round. He looked forward to a much more effective relationship and outcomes.

21 HEALTH AND LEISURE REVIEW

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that has been evaluating options of the future management of the Council's Health and Leisure Centres. Cllr Clarke reported that the work undertaken by the Group had been complex and time consuming, and the recommendations were based on a business approach. The Group had kept an open mind on possible options and the preferred option was dependent on it being viable with the eventual partner.

The Panel received a presentation on the vision and outcomes of the project and the way in which it was undertaken through site visits and conversations with other authorities on different delivery models and the evaluation of those against key criteria.

The Group had identified four management options to choose from to support the delivery of the desired outcomes:

- In-house management
- Partnering
- NFDC new company
- Asset transfer

The Partnership option was evaluated as having the greatest potential benefits, followed by the local authority trading company, both of which had the ability to deliver financial advantages in terms of VAT and business rates. It was explained that to further evaluation the Partnership Model as the preferred approach, it was agreed to engage consultants to ascertain the market interest in the health and leisure centres in a two-month exercise that would cost around £10,000, to be met within existing budgets.

If the Partnership Model proved unworkable, the second option (the trading company) would be explored.

In summary a partnering model would allow financial savings, access to external funding and experience in the market, protection from local authority funding cuts, the majority of operating risks transferred to the operator and TUPE transfer of staff on broadly similar terms. Staff would be kept abreast of developments along with schools affected.

It was explained that once a market engagement exercise had been undertaken by the consultants, a report back would be brought to the 20 November Panel meeting and December Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Partnership Model be pursued as the preferred option, giving the greatest future benefits for the community and the delivery of the service.
- (b) The market engagement exercise be undertaken and the findings reported back to the Panel in November.
- (c) That a consultant be commissioned to undertake the market engagement exercise.

22 CORPORATE CUSTOMER SERVICES

The Panel received a presentation and update on progress in improving customer transactions online and through the Council's Information Offices; and also improving connectivity within the Council's own systems to ensure efficient payment transactions.

The presentation included various statistics on customer usage (199,000 visits to the eight Information Offices and 166,000 calls taken annually by the Customer Service Centre alone). This was broken down into various channels such as phone, email and webchat, with the majority of contact being on phone calls, with Health and Leisure being the largest recipient of calls.

The presentation also included a breakdown of revenue received through the Customer Service Centre which amounted to nearly £1.3 million, housing rents being the largest category. The presentation also showed the proportion of enquiries for each of the main functions (such as missed bins, garden waste, pest control etc.), and customer satisfaction data by telephone and email (85% and 92% satisfaction respectively). Online transactions cost significantly less compared with phone and email, with a high proportion of activity, not adding value for customers.

The advent of Smarter Working, the Health and Leisure Review, and other business improvements such as ICT infrastructure, had all contributed to an opportunity for a fundamental review for improved customer outcomes and cost efficiencies.

In conclusion, it was proposed that the Task and Finish Group be reconvened to resume this work to drive forward these changes in Customer Service and test the market for a new website. It was agreed that the current membership of the Task and Finish Group would continue.

23 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted its current work programme.

24 DATES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the following meeting dates be agreed:

(Tuesdays, 6.00 p.m.)

18 June 2019
17 September
21 January
17 March

25 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PANEL

RESOLVED:

That a special meeting of the Panel be held on Tuesday, 20 November 2018 at 6.00 p.m. in the Bradbury Room, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

26 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

With the Chairman's agreement, Cllr Clarke, the Council's representative on the Hampshire Crime Panel, explained he had met with Cllr Mrs Andrews (Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs) and the Police Crime Commissioner in Lymington to discuss the move from the old Lymington Police Station to the Lymington Town Hall, which should be achieved by May 2019. The marketing of the old Police Station would follow. Cllr Clarke also mentioned the launch of an Anti-Fraud and Scams Initiative and related actions. A Hate Crime Awareness Week was being held in October.

CHAIRMAN