

**15 JANUARY 2019**

**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, 15 January 2019

\* 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 (Community Affairs Portfolio Holder)  
J E Binns (Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder)

**Officers Attending:**

C Read, Mrs M Sandhu, J Burton, B Byrne, Miss J Debnam, Mrs R Drummond and Ms N Swift

**Apologies:**

None were received.

**31 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2018 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Beck, Carpenter and White – minute 35.

**33 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

**34 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS**

Cllr Binns, the Health and Leisure Portfolio Holder, reported that work in preparation for the tender process to seek a partner to run the health and leisure centres was progressing well. Information gathering was the current focus, which would include a full condition survey of each of the buildings. A series of customer forums would be held in June 2019 to clarify the outcomes that the customers wanted to see before there was further engagement with potential partners.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that the operation of the crèche at Applemore Recreation Centre would be taken over by Hamble Early Years on 1 February 2019.

The recruitment for the new structure to operate the health and leisure centres was progressing. There had been 39 applications for the 6 shift manager posts, of which 13 people had been interviewed. There had been 3 external and 3 internal appointments made.

The Portfolio Holder also reported that the new senior management team for the health and leisure centres was working together well and the business was well on target to achieve the required level of savings against the budget, partly through income generation.

Business performance at the health and leisure centres was showing encouraging growth. One of the centres had been below target for the 6 week period leading up to Christmas, but that target had previously been revised upwards. The centre had achieved the originally set targets. One key area of focus was to encourage more memberships, as opposed to single pay and play attendances. This was in accordance with national business trends.

Work on the Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park had been subject to delay as the Steering Group evaluated the findings of various reports that had been commissioned. It had been expected that there would have been a further round of public consultations by this stage. The process was expected to start again in June. Internally, this Council had appointed a task and finish group to advise the Portfolio Holder. This group had met once and made some very constructive comments, which were being fed back into the process.

Cllr D Andrews, the Community Affairs Portfolio Holder, reported that there were no new issues under her portfolio that needed to be brought to members' attention.

**35 SAFER NEW FOREST PARTNERSHIP - PRIORITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

Cllr Beck disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as the Chairman of the New Forest Association of Local Councils which was a consultee on the appropriate assessment, leading to the development of the Partnership Plan.

Cllrs Carpenter and White asked that it be recorded that they were members of Hampshire County Council and that their comments and decisions at this meeting were based on the information now before them, but they reserved the right to change their view in the light of any additional information.

The Panel was advised that, normally, the local Chief Inspector of Police would have been present at this meeting, but unfortunately the new Chief Inspector would not be taking up their post until the end of January 2019.

The Panel considered the strategic assessment prepared by the Safer New Forest Strategy Group on behalf of the responsible authorities for discharging crime and disorder functions in the District. This assessment looked at statistics and trends for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 to inform the development of the annual Partnership Plan which would set out agreed strategies for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

It was noted that interpretation of the crime statistics and trends was difficult for a number of factors, including changes in the way certain crimes were classified and recorded; and also the use of percentage increases, which could give the erroneous impression of large increases in certain categories. For example, there had been an increase in recorded instances of theft, but the increase in this District was lower than surrounding areas and the national trend. There had also been an increase in the number of recorded vehicle offences, but this was partly as a result of instances of criminal damage to vehicles now being included.

For last year the Partnership had decided to be more focussed in their work and had introduced 4 priority areas, each of which had a lead partner and which was supported by actions throughout the year to ensure delivery. The priority areas were:

- Children at Risk
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Drug and alcohol related harm
- Domestic abuse

The statistical trends demonstrated that this approach was being successful and it was therefore proposed that the Partnership should retain these priorities to allow them to embed further.

One innovation in the last year had been the organisation of the first Safer New Forest Conference. Over 200 organisations had supported the event, which had been held at Brockenhurst College. This had been a valuable opportunity to identify the resources that were available through each organisation and to look at potential synergies and opportunities for directing the resources that were available to meet the identified needs.

Members were advised that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner had been looking at developing a database for each community safety partnership to give them a more detailed analytic overview of the crime data.

In the ensuing debate Members identified the harm being caused by the various cybercrimes that were becoming increasingly prevalent. The fraudsters were increasingly convincing and could be threatening. This crime intruded directly into people's homes and could be very damaging, both materially and psychologically. It was likely that such crimes were very under reported as people would not wish to admit that they had been attacked in this way. In addition, with an older population, there was likely to be a greater level of vulnerability in the local population. This was very much a hidden crime.

Members were advised that this type of crime was addressed through the National Fraud Office, not locally. Their concerns were noted; particularly bearing in mind the specific vulnerability of the local demographic and also that the government was itself increasingly requiring people to engage with them through electronic means, which exacerbated this problem. Locally, whenever possible, steps were taken to increase awareness of the latest scams, but consideration could be given to using additional means, for example by using mechanisms through the New Forest Association of Local Councils. Members' concerns would be forwarded to the Safer New Forest Partnership.

Members also raised concerns about the level of anti-social behaviour, citing Lymington as having a particular problem at the present time. Local knowledge suggested that drugs were a key factor in this increase. The lack of police resources to respond to incidents was concerning and perpetrators were encouraged in their offending behaviour by their perceived low chance of detection and resultant consequences. In the ensuing discussion it was established that there was a mismatch between recorded incidents and what councillors knew, from local intelligence, was actually happening. Members were reminded that the direction of police resources was very much intelligence led, based upon reported incidents. It was therefore essential that incidents were reported and that intelligence about perpetrators was passed on to the police, using the Crime Stoppers confidential phone service if that was most appropriate. This was the only way to ensure that the police were aware of the problems locally and could then assign a commensurate priority for the allocation of resources. Members were reminded that there was already a mechanism in place to allow town and parish councils to submit information directly to the police, using a specific form. New Milton Town Council, for one, already took advantage of this service. It was agreed that the officers would ensure that all the town and parish councils were reminded of the availability of this service.

The Panel was reminded that the strategic assessment document, by its very nature, being full of statistical information, was hard to interpret and was not helpful to the wider public in understanding what was happening in the District. The Partnership Plan, which would be prepared to respond to the strategic assessment, was more public facing and would set out, in more understandable terms, the actions and priorities for the coming year.

It was emphasised that the New Forest remained one of the safest place in the UK to live, work and visit.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Safer New Forest Partnership be advised that the Panel supports the continuing focus on the 4 priority areas that have directed activities in the current year and concur with the view that further time is needed to allow these priorities and supporting actions to embed and deliver outcomes;
- (b) That the Partnership be advised of the Panel's concern about the increasing prevalence of cyber-crimes and the need to take action to protect local people; and
- (c) That the officers ensure that all town and parish councils are aware of the mechanisms that are already available for bringing concerns about crime and disorder, antisocial behaviour and information about offenders to the attention of the police.

**36 COMMUNITY GRANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Panel received the recommendations of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group, which had assessed the applications that had been received for grant aid in the 2019/20 financial year.

The Panel welcomed the introduction of greater rigour and transparency into the process. They were also pleased to note the introduction of a budget for the grants. The grants payable were now more reflective of the budgetary constraints that applied to the Council across all service areas and would increasingly emphasise the message that the Council should, in future, be seen as a source of funding of last resort, once other sources had proved unsuccessful. In the past the Council had been seen as the first potential source of funding to be approached. The focus on delivering outcomes that were important to the Council was also welcome.

The Panel thanked the Task and Finish Group and supporting officers for their detailed evaluation of the grant applications, leading to the development of robust, soundly based recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the community grant awards as set out in paragraph 4.1, and in more detail in Appendix 1, to report item 6, be recommended to the Cabinet for approval and inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan; and
- (b) That the Cabinet be advised that Citizens' Advice New Forest should be awarded a revenue grant of £229,500 in 2019/20; and
- (c) That, in future, grant awardees be invited to a second interview in July to update the Council on progress with their projects and also to be advised of alternative sources of funding should they be considering further grant applications to the Council.

**37 WORK PROGRAMME****RESOLVED:**

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

CHAIRMAN

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## COMMUNITY AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	LEAD OFFICER
<b>18 March 2019</b>			
Dibden Golf Centre	To receive the bi-annual update from the Chairman of the Task & Finish Group	Verbal update to Panel	<b>Cllr B Andrews/Colin Read</b>
Community Strategy	To consider the development of an over-arching strategy for community matters.	Report to Panel	<b>Rebecca Drummond/Manjit Sandhu</b>
Customer Services	To receive the Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations	Report to Panel	<b>Rebecca Drummond / Cllr O'Sullivan.</b>
Citizen's Advice Bureau	To agree new management arrangements and related issues; including grants	Task and Finish Group (transferring from COP)	<b>Ryan Stevens</b>
<b>Items for the future</b>			
Young People - Wellbeing	As part of the Council's role on Community Safety to understand the issues that affect the wellbeing of young people living in the District (Mental Health)	Presentation to the Panel	<b>Manjit Sandhu/Cllr Binns</b>
Eling Tide Mill – Annual report			
St. Barbe's Museum – Annual Report.			

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