

9 DECEMBER 2019

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 9 December 2019

- * Cllr Allan Glass (Chairman)
- * Cllr Derek Tipp (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Diane Andrews
- * Ann Bellows
- * Sue Bennison
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- * Hilary Brand
- Alex Brunsdon
- * Fran Carpenter
- * Louise Cerasoli
- * Mark Clark
- * Rebecca Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Anne Corbridge
- * Keith Craze
- Kate Crisell
- Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * Arthur Davis
- * Sandra Delemare
- * Philip Dowd
- * Jan Duke
- * Barry Dunning
- * Jacqui England
- * Andrew Gossage
- * Michael Harris
- * David Harrison
- David Hawkins
- * Edward Heron

Councillors:

- * Jeremy Heron
- Cllr Alison Hoare
- * Maureen Holding
- * Christine Hopkins
- * Mahmoud Kangarani
- * Joshua Kidd
- * Emma Lane
- Martyn Levitt
- Alexis McEvoy
- * Ian Murray
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Neville Penman
- * Caroline Rackham
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Barry Rickman
- Tony Ring
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * David Russell
- * Ann Sevier
- * Mark Steele
- * Michael Thierry
- * Beverley Thorne
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * John Ward

*Present

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Grainne O'Rourke, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Brunsdon, Crisell, Hawkins, Hoare, Levitt, McEvoy and Ring.

51 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019, be confirmed.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests made by Members.

Cllrs M Clark, R Clark, Delemare, Dowd, Osborne, A Wade and M Wade, for transparency purposes, declared non-pecuniary interests in respect of item 5 on the agenda, Reports of Cabinet, at minute 55 below. The interests concerned their membership of Hythe and Dibden Parish Council, which had developed the Hythe and Dibden Neighbourhood Plan, for adoption by the Council. They each concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent them from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

Cllrs Carpenter, Harrison, E Heron, Penman, Thierry and M Wade, for transparency purposes, declared non-pecuniary interests in respect of item 5 on the agenda, Reports of Cabinet, at minute 55 below. The interests concerned their membership of Hampshire County Council. They each concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent them from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

53 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:-

November

- 10 Attended the Remembrance Day Service and Parade in Lyndhurst
- 11 Attended the New Forest Mencap's Annual General Meeting
- 12 Attended Community First New Forest's Annual General Meeting
- 15 Attended the Beaulieu Estate Dinner

The full list of engagements would be available to view in the upcoming Councillor Information Bulletin.

The Chairman reminded the Council of the upcoming Civic Christmas Carol Service, taking place at 7.00 pm on Friday 13 December 2019 at Beaulieu Abbey Church, Palace Lane, Beaulieu.

The Chairman reported on the Christmas Raffle, in support of his charities, Solent Dolphin and the New Forest Disability Information Service. There were three prizes available to win, with tickets available to buy from Information Officers at Appletree Court front desk. The draw will take place on Wednesday 18 December 2019.

54 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council reported on the following:-

Police Cadet Awards

The Council was informed that the Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs attended Hampshire Safer Awards for volunteers last week in Winchester. New Forest Police Cadet Unit was nominated for their development of a high visibility patrol and prevention operation within forest car parks. The cadets and leaders engaged with vehicle owners to provide advice and literature around vehicle and property safety and also provided a deterrence to offenders through the provision of a visible presence. From February 2018 – February 2019, vehicle crime within New Forest car parks visibly reduced.

Brilliance in Business Awards

Members were thanked for their support of the Brilliance in Business Awards. Over 150 people were in attendance including over 70 local businesses.

In total there were over 100 nominations from over 100 businesses and the overall winners were Balmer Lawn Hotel. This year there were 10 categories of awards with the winners of the District Council's award for Customer Care being Clearview Aerials, from Hythe.

Go New Forest Cards

The Council was informed that the Executive Management Team had agreed to provide Go New Forest Discount Cards to Council employees and councillors. The cards could be used at many local businesses to obtain discounts on food and drink, arts and crafts, bike hire, health and fitness and outdoor activities. There were obvious benefits to getting discounts from local retailers who will also benefit from increased sales. The Council welcomed this relatively small investment that not only supports local business but provides benefits to Council employees.

55 REPORTS OF CABINET

The Leader of the Council presented the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 6 November and 4 December 2019, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr E Heron seconded the motion.

Item 5 (4 December 2019) – Council Tax Discounts, Exemptions and Premiums

A number of Members spoke in support of the revised recommendations which proposed a council tax exemption for care leavers, highlighting the positive impact this would have at a relatively small cost to the Council.

Item 1 (4 December 2019) – Phase III of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes (2021-2027)

Cllr Harrison highlighted this item and welcomed that New Forest District Council was leading on the work. However, he expressed concern on the appropriate finances being in place to take schemes forward and until central government

comes forward with a commitment, adequate coastal defences would remain a concern to him.

Item 2 (4 December 2019) – Consultation Draft Transport Strategy for the South East by TFSE

A number of Members highlighted the importance of promoting and securing improved rail links in the New Forest.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

56 REPORT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP - ARTHRITIS MOTION

Cllr Cleary presented the report of the Private Sector Housing Task and Finish Group and moved the adoption of the revised motion as set out in the report and as follows:-

“This Council notes that:

- *Arthritis and related conditions of muscles, bones and joints affect 17.8 million people across the UK.*
- *People with these conditions often need access to the social care system.*
- *Versus Arthritis’ policy report ‘Adapted Homes, Empowered Lives’ details the positive impact home aids and adaptations can have on people with arthritis. Their quantitative research among 1059 people with arthritis found that:*
 - *60% of people with arthritis used an aid or adaptation*
 - *95% felt that aids and adaptations have had a positive impact on their lives*
 - *79% felt that aids and adaptations had helped them maintain their independence.*
- *Services that provide aids and adaptations are proven to be cost-effective and can result in health and care savings.*
- *Only 16% of people with arthritis with eligible care needs surveyed knew of the support that their council can offer them.*

This Council believes that an effective provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant and community equipment services can help people with arthritis achieve a better quality of life and reduce pressure on the social care system.

This Council endorses Versus Arthritis’ policy report ‘Adapted Homes, Empowered Lives’ and its recommendations.

This Council will evaluate its information and advice services about aids and adaptations and housing in line with best practice guidance to ensure they meet the needs of people with musculoskeletal conditions.

This Council will continue to be all inclusive and support those with all types of disability.”

Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Cllr M Wade welcomed the revised motion and thanked Members and Officers for their work in bringing it forward.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes that:

- Arthritis and related conditions of muscles, bones and joints affect 17.8 million people across the UK.
- People with these conditions often need access to the social care system.
- Versus Arthritis' policy report 'Adapted Homes, Empowered Lives' details the positive impact home aids and adaptations can have on people with arthritis. Their quantitative research among 1059 people with arthritis found that:
 - 60% of people with arthritis used an aid or adaptation
 - 95% felt that aids and adaptations have had a positive impact on their lives
 - 79% felt that aids and adaptations had helped them maintain their independence.
- Services that provide aids and adaptations are proven to be cost-effective and can result in health and care savings.
- Only 16% of people with arthritis with eligible care needs surveyed knew of the support that their council can offer them.

This Council believes that an effective provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant and community equipment services can help people with arthritis achieve a better quality of life and reduce pressure on the social care system.

This Council endorses Versus Arthritis' policy report 'Adapted Homes, Empowered Lives' and its recommendations.

This Council will evaluate its information and advice services about aids and adaptations and housing in line with best practice guidance to ensure they meet the needs of people with musculoskeletal conditions.

This Council will continue to be all inclusive and support those with all types of disability.

57 QUESTIONS

There were none.

58 NOTICE OF MOTION

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr Andrews, on behalf of Cllr Hoare, moved the following motion:-

"We live in a unique part of the world and as such we have unique problems and challenges when trying to protect not just our wildlife and pets, but the ponies, cattle and pigs who freely roam the forest. These are an integral part of our history and culture, the animals are people's stock and livelihood. Fireworks can cause many problems for animals, not just from the noise, but from the debris of spent rockets

which land within the forest, countryside and gardens which can cause severe distress or even death, if eaten.

Within the NFDC area there are also many people for whom fireworks are a source of distress, for example, the elderly, ex-service men and women and those who are vulnerable due to mental or physical challenges.

To this end the Council resolves to:

- (a) Engage with Government and local Members of Parliament to seek greater national regulation with regard to private and organised firework displays.*
- (b) Actively promote a public awareness campaign within the District about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people, including precautions that can be taken to mitigate this.*
- (c) To require all public firework displays within (and encourage those just outside) the District to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.*
- (d) To work with the NFNPA, Forestry England and Hampshire County Council for a joint and integrated approach.”*

Cllr E Heron seconded the motion.

The Chairman confirmed that, in accordance with Standing Order 41, the motion should stand referred to the Cabinet, or such Committees or Panels as the Council may determine. In view of the subject matter, Cllr Glass moved that the motion be referred to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, with further input from other Committees and Panels as necessary. Cllr Tipp seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the motion be referred to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

59 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22A as follows:-

- Cllr Duke to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Cleary, on the Council's use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Cllr Gossage to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Cllr Harris, on targeted engagement with businesses.
- Cllr Penman to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, Cllr Steele, on a Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Cllr M Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman on Corporate Parenting.

Note – a copy of the full questions and replied are appended to these minutes.

60 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Craze be appointed to serve on the HR Committee in place of Cllr J Ward.

CHAIRMAN

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FULL COUNCIL – 9 DECEMBER 2019 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

Question 1

From Cllr Jan Duke to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Jill Cleary

I have noticed in past years the increasing costs associated with this Council's use of bed and breakfast. Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how she intends to reduce this?

Answer:

The provision of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless households has been a long standing emergency and temporary housing solution in response to a crisis situation. Whilst the use of this accommodation is intended for emergency placements and for short periods only, the number of households presenting to the Council in crisis situations have increased over the last few years.

This Council recognises that there needs to be better alternatives to the use of B&B accommodation for homeless households. That is why, in our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (which we adopted in April this year), we have made it one of our top objectives, to end the use of external B&B accommodation.

To achieve this aim the Council is currently investing in and developing its own emergency temporary accommodation in all of our major population areas, with access to clean bedding, en-suite bathrooms and a shared or dedicated kitchen. Our first such building, at Pentagon Court in Blackfield, has provided housing for 16 households, across 6 rooms, since the 25th of May this year. The annual reduction in B&B expenditure from this building alone, is around £130,000 per year. Our 2nd new building, at Ocknell Grove in Hythe, will, with effect from this week, welcome some of our most vulnerable ex-rough sleepers who have embarked upon a programme to turn their lives around. Getting the right accommodation and support is absolutely fundamental and I am delighted that we are now delivering on both these fronts. It has helped enormously that we have now in place, for the very first time, 4 of our own Housing Support Workers who provide intensive support to those with complex needs in order to prevent homelessness, sustain accommodation as well as helping rough sleepers access accommodation, access benefits and linking up with other services for vulnerable people.

We have also purchased Blease Court in Lymington, another property in Ashley Road in New Milton and another in Christchurch Road, Ringwood, which will bring forward a further 16-18 rooms over the next year. We are also in current negotiations to acquire another 6 room building, and I hope to announce a positive outcome shortly, plus development plans for another 25 rooms over the next few years.

I am sure you will agree that this is a significant achievement. The provision of more suitable temporary accommodation is not the only key objective we are working on. We have a clear direction of delivery in a number of key areas that will transform the lives of those in housing need in our communities. We are changing the way we allocate social housing in the District so that people get housing based on need, and not how long they have been waiting on the Housing Register. We are building and acquiring more council housing; we are developing our own Shared Ownership Scheme (which will be coming to fruition in Spring next year) and we are currently developing a new Private Sector Housing Strategy which will bring a whole suite of benefits for those that rely on the private rented sector.

I'm sure you will all agree that our proactive and targeted response on a significant number of new initiatives will help transform the lives of so many in our community.

Question 2

From Cllr Andrew Gossage to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Cllr Michael Harris

At the last Cabinet meeting you told us that there are 8000 businesses in the New Forest and you now want to “target engagement” with them. What can the very small businesses in my Ward of Pennington look forward to in the future and how will they be able to access information relevant to their specific business area?

Answer:

New Forest District Council recognises the significance of the 89% of businesses within Pennington and the wider New Forest District which are micro businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees) as well as the value these businesses and entrepreneurs add to our local economy in terms of employment, local spend and community benefit.

The Economic Development Team is currently exploring a range of initiatives to ensure that there is improved engagement between NFDC and businesses in the district. One of the options includes the development of a ‘one stop shop’ website and associated support. This will provide all businesses with important information on business services (including those offered by NFDC) and sources of advice and funding to help them to start, grow and sustain their businesses. Economic Development staff have and will continue to add value to the Council’s website by working with businesses to help them to navigate the often-complex business support and grant environment to address the relatively poor uptake of such opportunities by New Forest businesses.

Where applicable, the business support offer will be tailor-made to meet the needs of New Forest businesses in specific sectors or locations.

We will continue to work with partners to support micro businesses. This includes but is not limited to provision of free 1-1 start-up advice, a wide range of business seminars and training organised in conjunction with New Forest Business Partnership and others, as well as engagement with Solent Apprenticeship Hub to provide support and information to micro businesses who are unaware or unsure of how provide apprenticeship places within the business.

Question 3

From Cllr Neville Penman to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, Cllr Mark Steele

In the Corporate Plan 'Community Matters 2020 – 2024, how will you develop and deliver a Health and Wellbeing Strategy focusing on Physical Health, Mental Health, Tackling Health Inequalities and Creating Healthier Communities.

Answer:

To develop the New Forest District’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy we will be using the insight and information that is available from a variety of sources to identify the key themes that are of concern and focus resources to tackle these issues. These areas will focus on the physical and mental health of our residents.

A wealth of information exists and we will use this to shape our strategy. We will use resources such as Public Health England's annual report on the Wider Determinants of Health for each local authority.

The Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Board has developed a strategy for the County. This too will be taken into account as part of the District Council's strategy development. The County's strategy has identified the key areas that should be a focus and these will be relevant to the District, with different weightings for our area against these County priorities depending on the results of local insight.

We will continue to work with our national, regional and local partners, to help deliver a joined up approach to better ensure that the health wellbeing of our residents is advanced. The strategy will identify areas that we can deliver as a District Council and also areas where we will work in partnership.

To work with me, I will be asking the Community and Leisure Panel for a Task and Finish Group who will help me develop the strategy over the next 12 months.

Question 4

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Barry Rickman

Can the Leader of the Council advise the Council Members, what are their responsibilities as a Corporate Parent for Looked After Children?

Answer:

This is a role which we perform for every child in our community and not just those in the County Council's care.

When I say every child, I mean every child that enters our Health & Leisure Centres, every child that lives in our Council Housing, every child that is part of a homeless family and in need of housing, every child that uses our local taxis safely, every child that is leaving care to embark upon life's journey or every child that just needs our local support and that of our partners.

At the District Council we recognise that we need all councillors and staff to be looking out for the best interests of all our young people including the most vulnerable children.

We recognise the importance of providing a housing pathway for care leavers once they are ready to leave care. Our new Homeseach Allocation Policy, approved in April 2019, provides both care leavers and young people living in Supported Accommodation with an urgent Band 2 priority, where they are ready for independent living. This enables care leavers to access social housing in the District which is absolutely vital.

Alongside this new Policy, we work closely with the Hampshire County Council's Care Leavers' Team, who are represented at our Homelessness Multi-Agency Forum, to support young care leavers obtain housing advice and accommodation. Our Housing Team has provided housing training to HCC in order for them to better support care leavers.

This Council has signed up to a Joint protocol with HCC to work together to help resolve situations where 16-17-year olds (including care leavers of that age), are at risk of homelessness, providing them with advice, accommodation, care and support, whilst a long term solution is achieved.

Our commitment to care leavers has also been demonstrated earlier this evening when we approved a Council Tax exemption for this important group.

We also recognise and value the important role each employee and Councillor has in identifying and addressing the needs of vulnerable children. To undertake and support the effective delivery of this function, the Council has dedicated safeguarding lead officers who provide training and advice to staff and members. 295 Council employees have attended and completed level 2 safeguarding training since October 2018 with a similar number scheduled for next year. Over the past 12 months, 27 individual cases of concern relating to neglect, psychological abuse and homelessness affecting children were raised to our partners in Children Services. In doing so, this enabled children and families to access services provided by this Council and our partners.

In 2012 the Council took on the additional responsibilities for delivering the Supporting Families programme, assisting vulnerable and 'at risk' families who reside in the New Forest District area. Since commencing this programme, officers of the Council have worked with over 700 children and families, acting in the best interests of the child, getting them back into education, assisting parents with obtaining employment, helping to break the generational dependence on the welfare system.

We will continue to take our Corporate Parenting responsibilities very seriously and recognise that every child in our community, including care leavers deserve our support and positive action to access the same opportunities and fulfil their ambitions.

I have asked the Chief Executive to arrange a training session to ensure that all Members fully understand and are aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.