

21 JANUARY 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Community & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday, 21 January 2020

- * Cllr Geoffrey Blunden (Chairman)
- * Cllr Neville Penman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Steve Clarke
- * Keith Craze
- * Arthur Davis
- * Barry Dunning

Councillors:

- * David Hawkins
- * Caroline Rackham
- * David Russell
- Alex Wade

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Mark Steele, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing
Steve Davies
Martyn Levitt
Alan O'Sullivan

Also In Attendance:

Derek Biggs, Clerk, Totton & Eling Town Council

Officers Attending:

Jamie Burton, Brian Byrne, Rebecca Drummond, Sheryl Parry, Colin Read, Ryan Stevens, Carrie Hesp and Nikki Swift

Apologies

Cllr Alex Wade

25 MINUTES

Cllr A Davies declared an interest in item 4 (Eling Tide Mill)

Cllrs S Davies, A O'Sullivan and C Rackham declared interests in item 6 (Community Grants Task and Finish Group)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record .

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised.

28 ELING TIDE MILL (ETM) - PROGRESS REPORT

Cllr Arthur Davies declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Totton Town Council representative on the Eling Tide Mill Trust. He concluded that there were no issues under common law that prevented him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

The Panel received a presentation from representatives of Totton and Eling Town Council and the Eling Tide Mill Experience on current performance against the Business Plan for the ETM, together with details of the way in which financial contributions from the District Council would be utilised.

It was explained that in 2014, the Heritage Lottery Fund had made a grant of £1.6m enabling a total of £2m worth of works for the Eling Tide Mill Experience. The District Council had agreed a contribution of £32,000 in the last financial year, and the Budget Task and Finish Group had requested that a report be made to the Panel, giving an update on the management of the Eling Tide Mill, including visitor numbers. Mr Biggs explained that whilst the facility had had a successful year, visitor numbers had not met expectations, with 5/6,000 visitors per annum compared to the expected 14/15,000 visitors. He hoped that the Council would consider funding the facility at £32,000 for one further year, with a view to reducing the funding over a four year period. The Town Council had invested substantial funds in the project early on, and were now considering ways to reduce operating costs.

The facility had a projected £80,000 financial loss in the past year. The aim was to work to a more sustainable future on costs and income, and reduce the subsidy from the Council. Until 31 December 2019, the Tide Mill had been tied into various constraints required by the Lottery Heritage Fund (LHF). It was now free to make operational changes, which it would hope would realise savings of between £30,000 - £40,000 per annum.

It was hoped that increased numbers of coach bookings could help generate further revenue. Advertising had been funded by the LHF and it was now planned to reassign the work of the ETM Education Officer role towards marketing activities and targeted advertising. It was suggested that an approach be made to English Heritage to affiliate with them. Overall it was felt that there was potential in promoting what was an inexpensive attraction.

Members requested that an update be given at a future meeting, setting out the new business plan, with more detailed income and expenditure information.

The Panel heard that there was overwhelming support from local people for the ETM, and in this connection it was felt that local residents could be encouraged to visit, perhaps out of season.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Steele, was very impressed with the ETM Team and they had had some useful discussions concerning the long-term maintenance costs and he felt that the facility was a valuable asset.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That it be a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, that £32,000 be allocated to the Eling Tide Mill for 2020/21, on basis that future allocations will be reduced over the next four years.
- (b) That a further update be brought to the Panel on the business plan going forward in support of cost reductions and income generation.

29 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS

The Panel received updates from Cllr Steele on recent activities and issues:-

- Leisure Review – (Dealt with later on the Agenda) – in brief Customer Forums and Staff Briefings were continuing and were well attended although challenging. There had been some concerns about the process but it was stressed that no decision had been made on the future of the Leisure Centres.
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Lots of hard work was being put into this and there was a report later on in the Agenda.

30 COMMUNITY GRANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Cllr S Davies declared a non-pecuniary interest as District Council representative on Forest Arts Consultative Forum, but he concluded that there were no issues under common law that prevented him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

Cllr Alan O'Sullivan declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Parish Council representative on Forest Arts Consultative Forum, but he concluded that there were no issues under common law that prevented him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

Cllr Rackham declared a personal interest as that she had previously been employed by Forest Arts Consultative Forum, but she concluded that there were no issues under common law that prevented her from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote.

The Panel considered the report of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group including recommendations for the allocation of grants.

The Chairman of the Community Grant Task and Finish Group, Cllr Steve Davies introduced the Group's Report and felt this year's process had been a significant improvement in terms of scrutiny and member involvement. He thanked the Members and officers involved in the Task and Finish Group and hoped Members could see a clear and transparent process for the allocation of capital and revenue grants. New, more efficient arrangements had been evolved and the applications administration would be further reviewed and streamlined for the future.

In response to a comment, officers undertook to further clarify the upper and lower thresholds for grant applications on the Council's Website.

Members asked a number of questions on various applications and answers were given.

The Panel fully supported all of the group recommendations and accepted the Portfolio Holder's proposal for an increase in a grant to Youth and Families Matter from £5,000 to £7,500, as set out in the report. Minor amendments and clarifications were agreed prior to the report being submitted to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet, that the Community Grant awards set out in the report be approved for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Plan, subject to an amendment to increase the grant to Youth and Families Matter from £5,000 to £7,500, as proposed by the Community Affairs portfolio holder.

31 SAFER NEW FOREST PARTNERSHIP - CONSIDERATION OF CRIME AND DISORDER FIGURES FOR THE DISTRICT AND PROPOSED PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21

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 2018 to 31 March 2019 to inform the development of the annual Partnership Plan which would set out agreed strategies for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Community engagement had been undertaken and had resulted in 600 replies from members of the public, including young people and also responses from local parish councils. It was commented that there was a perceived fear with of the level of crime, driven by the media, which was not supported by the statistics. It was accepted that there was significant under reporting of some crimes. It was intended to use the New Forest Association of Local Councils to disseminate information concerning the Safer New Forest Partnership down through parish councils and to the community.

Media misrepresentation did not reflect the facts on the levels of crime. Resources were based on reported crime. However, it was noted that additional police officers were promised for the next financial year.

Members commented on the inadequacy of the Police 101 Service, and it was reported that these concerns had been raised with the Police.

It was commented that Violence Against Persons statistics had risen but there was no clear explanation for this. It was acknowledged that this could include domestic violence although no further information was available within the statistics. There was information on Violence Without Injury, harassment, and domestic abuse. Representations had been made to the Police about statistics but with the Home Office Information it was possible to drill down to get more useful information. Police resources for violence reduction locally were being assessed.

Again, it was emphasised that crimes should be reported as crime statistics informed local resources.

Reference was made to the concern over cyber crime and scams, and Trading Standards had been invited to work to counter this. Members supported this and highlighted the dangers to vulnerable people who were inexperienced with the use of computers.

A Member also raised concerns about antisocial behaviour in New Milton and felt that the Council had taken too long to respond.

RESOLVED:

That the Safer New Forest Partnership be advised that the Panel supports the continuing focus on the four priority areas that have directed activities in the current year, subject to comments made.

32 CORPORATE PLAN

The Panel considered a draft Corporate Plan for 2020 – 2024, Community Matters. The new Plan had been drawn up following the May 2019 elections and set out the proposed vision, aims, priorities and activities for the Council over the next 4 years.

Feedback had been sought through the Council's website and from Parish and Town Councils, as well as elected members, including the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Five responses had been received to date from the public which related to the Community and Leisure Overview Scrutiny Panel, which were summarised.

The comments would be considered prior to finalising the document.

RESOLVED:

That the draft corporate plan be endorsed.

33 CCTV UPDATE

The Panel received an update on developments with the Council's CCTV service and the Appletree Careline Service.

CCTV and Appletree Careline Service was split into four main areas of delivery:

- CCTV (70 closed circuit tv cameras)
- Appletree Careline Service (24 hour/365 day call monitoring service to 2,665 customers)
- Out of Hours Service (responding to calls when Customer Services was closed)
- Lone Working Monitoring Service (Lone working NFDC staff)

A review of the Service had been undertaken in May 2019, which had concluded that it had closer links with Community Safety and Housing than Emergency Planning.

A further review had been commenced in November 2019, concerning the staffing structure. The deletion of posts, and creation of others, had been necessary to reflect future operational requirements.

The CCTV Team were involved in over 1,000 incidents a year and their work resulted in 80 to 100 arrests providing footage reviews and media packages as evidence. The findings of the more recent review revealed good staff morale, a

need for greater emphasis on staff training and interaction with other departments, and alternative supervisory arrangements.

Details of the current and revised staffing structure were given, as well as on the refurbishment of the CCTV Control Room at Appletree Court. Mr Byrne introduced Carrie Hesp, the new operational manager who would oversee the new team.

It was reported that not all of the CCTV partnership agreements had been received back from parishes. Overall parish and town Councils were now funding their CCTV service as they should be. The positive impact on the community needed to be made more clear.

With reference to re-deployable cameras, attempts had been made to deploy a camera in one area, but this had not been successful due to weather conditions.

In answer to a question, Mr Byrne undertook to invite the Clerk to Lymington Town Council to view the new CCTV Control Room. It was also suggested that the Community Panel members be invited to view the new Control Room at a future meeting.

Members paid tribute to James Knight, the former CCTV and Civil Contingences Manager, (who was about to leave the Authority as a result of the restructure), for all of his support and assistance to the Panel over the years.

34 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Panel received an update on the need for the development of a local Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The report proposed the creation of a Task and Finish Working Group to develop and recommend a Health and Wellbeing Strategy to the Panel, with the focus of the work along the lines set out in the report, and in consultation with partner organisations.

The District Council had a key role to play in drawing together what was already being done in the District by the various agencies, and to capture this in a document which would inform the investment priorities of the Hampshire Public Health and Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Groups. The report set out the proposed work of the Task and Finish Group.

It was proposed that the Membership should be six members, including three from the Panel and three from the wider Council Membership. The Task and Finish Group would be meeting monthly for the next six months.

RESOLVED:

That a Task and Finish Group be created to develop a local Health and Wellbeing Strategy in collaboration with the portfolio holder, for submission to the Panel.

35 HEALTH & LEISURE REVIEW UPDATE

The Panel received a report setting out progress on the Health and Leisure review.

The report dealt with the procurement process and expressions of interest, which resulted in the 4 highest scoring bidders progressing to the next phase. Depending on their progress, the next step was the Invitation to Negotiate phase.

Details of Stakeholder Engagement were given, together with the provisional procurement timeline and financial implications.

Interested bidders had been invited to submit responses by the closing date of 18 October 2019. A bidder open day had been held across the five centres on the 3 October and the Evaluation Panel reviewed the responses from bidders and scored them on the main categories as follows:-

- Service Quality Criteria
- Organisation and resources
- Market viewpoint and Outlook
- Customer Experience and Continuous improvement
- Experience, Track Record and References

Once scores had been established the Evaluation Panel presented their findings to the Stakeholder Panel on the 7 November 2019.

Of the six bidders, four scored 6 or above in all categories, which would indicate that each of these was capable of delivering the service to the expected standards as a minimum.

A detailed Tender Pack had been completed and made available. Contracts had been drawn up using internal and external legal support and included requirements regarding facilities, contract performance, management provisions, change protocols, council policies, draft underleases and payment mechanisms.

Four bidders, who had progressed through the Expressions of Interest phase, were formally invited to tender on the 29 November 2019.

By the end of December, around 100 requests were received for further information from the bidders, which were being responded to by the Project Team. The closing date for tenders had been extended from 20 January to 31 January, to allow a thorough response from bidders.

The Evaluation Panel will spend a period of at least two weeks considering the bids received to establish a final score.

On Stakeholder Engagement, the Project Team continued to engage with key stakeholder groups including the monthly Customer Focus Groups and the Health and Leisure Staff Forum as well as meetings with Trade Union Representatives. Engagement was also continuing with Hampshire County Council and the affected schools, as well as the Customer Forum. Approximately 250 Customers attended the Customer Forums across five meetings in December. The Task and Finish Group continues to meet approximately every three weeks to receive updates, including procurement progress and stakeholder engagements.

It was noted that the Evaluation Panel were expected to present their evaluation response to the Task and Finish Group and then to the Stakeholder Panel in early/mid March, when one or more bidders will progress to the negotiation stage.

'Best and Final' offers were expected to be made by the end March/early April, and bidders would then present this to customers and stakeholder groups in late April.

The Panel would receive a further update at its meeting in March and any recommendations will be presented to the Panel in June. Final recommendations would be presented to the Cabinet and Council in July 2020 for a decision.

Members noted the financial implications, including the additional budget requirement of £50,000 from the Council's pre-approved service transformation fund. In answer to a question about the financial implications, it was explained that the additional budget requirement was in part due to the project not being based on a standard contract, and that the extra diligence involved meant a more costly process. The original estimate was based on a standard contract and the review had evolved over time. The process was a complex one, with negotiations with schools, the County Council and a very detailed tender specification.

In answer to a question, it was hoped that bids would substantially improve upon the current surplus to realise the anticipated savings.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, including the additional budget requirement of £50,000 from the Council's pre-approved Service Transformation Fund, and that the Panel continues to receive regular updates.

36 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel reviewed its work programme.

37 HAMPSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Panel received an update Cllr Clarke, the NFDC Representative on the Hampshire Police Crime Panel, gave an update on recent activities of the Panel.

The Panel noted that 200 additional Police Officers were being recruited in Hampshire. Details were also given of a number of other issues.

CHAIRMAN