

6 JULY 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 6 July 2020

- * 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
- * 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, Colin Read, Andy Rogers, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cerasoli, Murray and J Ward.

75 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to minute 66 – Reports of the Cabinet Item 3 (19 February 2020) – Electoral Review of New Forest District Council – Warding Pattern Proposals, being amended to delete the word “Council” from the following text:- “Cllr Duke highlighted the impact of the District Council’s proposals on Boldre Parish Council”, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2020, be confirmed.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Cllr Gossage declared, for transparency purposes, a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 on the agenda – Reports of the Cabinet dated 6 May 2020, item 4 – Adoption of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy. The interest concerned the proximity of his brother’s home to Strategic Site 6 in the proposed Local Plan. Cllr Gossage concluded that there was no common law issue of bias or predetermination that prevented him from remaining in the meeting to speak and vote on this item, considered at minute 81 below.

Cllr Rackham declared, for transparency purposes, that she would be asking a question at item 9 on the agenda – Questions to Portfolio Holders Under Standing Order 22A, at minute 83 below. The question related to Arts and Culture in the New Forest, and she had previously worked in this area.

77 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Hampshire Day**

The Chairman reported that, to mark Hampshire Day on Wednesday 15 July 2020, a number of themed photographs would be released featuring the Chairman at locations across the New Forest District.

78 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Camping in the Forest**

The Leader of the Council reported in detail on the steps the Council had taken since it was made aware that Camping in the Forest (CITF) had taken a decision not to open any of their 10 sites in the New Forest during 2020. This amounted to over 3,000 pitches.

It was noted that the Council, alongside its New Forest partners of Forestry England, the National Park Authority, the Verderers and Go New Forest, had received no notification of the action by the company until it was public knowledge.

The Leader expressed his disappointment with the company and concern in relation to the impact that this action may have on the New Forest economy, loss of local employment and supply chain costs. It was estimated that £16 million could be lost from guest expenditure alone between 4 July and 28 September 2020.

With the campsites closed it also had the potential to have a significant impact on the New Forest environment and community if camping visitors arrived with no proper facilities to use.

Recognising the potential adverse impact this could have on the New Forest, the Leader confirmed that he had asked the Chief Executive to engage with all partners, in order to try and mitigate all of the issues that may occur before any new arrangements can be put in place. Furthermore, given the relationship with Government and the potential significant impact on the local economy and tourism businesses, the Leader confirmed that he had written to the three Secretaries of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as well as the two local MPs, to use whatever pressures available to bring to bear on the company to reconsider their decision.

A copy of this letter is attached to these minutes.

The Council were informed that efforts were being made to identify whether in the medium term any other local operators could extend their operations to offer more campsite pitches. The Leader would update Members further as progress was made.

79 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020 - IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council moved the adoption of the recommendations as set out on the agenda at item six. Cllr E Heron seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council notes that, in accordance with the above Regulations:-
 - (i) There is no requirement for New Forest District Council to hold an Annual Meeting in 2020; and
 - (ii) Any appointments that would have been made or required to have been made by law at the Annual Meeting, continue until such time as the Council determines. These appointments include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Committees and Panels.
- (b) That the Council agrees to continue with the current arrangements as approved at the Annual Meeting on 20 May 2019, until the Annual Meeting on 17 May 2021.

80 ATTENDANCE DISPENSATION UNDER SECTION 85 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Chairman spoke briefly on the extraordinary challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis and expressed his pride at the Council's response. In light of the continued uncertainty faced by all local authorities and public sector organisations, he moved the adoption of the recommendation as set out on the agenda at item seven. Cllr Tipp seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That, having regard to the current circumstances arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and in accordance with Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the requirement for all New Forest District Councillors to attend any meeting of the authority throughout a period of six consecutive months, be waived for a six month period commencing 6 July 2020, therefore expiring on 6 January 2021.

81 REPORTS OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council presented the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 6 May, 3 June and 1 July 2020 and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr E Heron seconded the motion.

Item 4 (6 May 2020) – Adoption of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy

Cllr E Heron, as the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure introduced the recommendations and highlighted the sensitivity of a local plan for such a protected area. The plan had been the outcome of a significant amount of work over the last five years. In addressing local concerns, it was noted that the plan had undergone two major rounds of consultation in 2016 and 2018 respectively. Furthermore, failing to adopt the plan could put the Council at significant risk by having to plan for an additional 10,000-20,000 dwellings.

Cllr England moved the following amendment on this item:-

“To ask the Secretary of State to direct that the Local Plan is modified to remove Strategic Site Six (SS6), and to defer the question of the adoption of the plan in the meantime.”

Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment and spoke briefly on both the local concerns in relation to SS6 and the need to secure more genuinely affordable housing both in Pennington and across the District.

A number of other local councillors spoke to the local concerns raised in connection with SS6 in Pennington. Their concerns related to the rural sensitivities, safety of cyclists and walkers and wildlife. Whilst local councillors expressed their regret for the inclusion of SS6, some had also concluded that to address the overall District housing need and the risks of returning a local plan to its infancy, the case for adopting the plan outweighed that of deferring the issue.

Strategic Site Four (SS4) was raised by a number of local councillors, some who also concluded that whilst the necessary infrastructure was absolutely critical to this and other developments along the waterside, particularly relating to transport, the adoption of the overall plan was necessary to retain control over its future direction. Members continued to try and press for more improvements to the A326, which already faced significant congestion.

In responding to the amendment, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure reiterated that it was a highly significant risk that failing to adopt the plan would return it to a place outside of the Council's own methodology, requiring much greater numbers of planned development.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, Cllr England highlighted that SS6 had not always been included in earlier versions of the local plan, and the volume of opposition locally was such that she could not support the local plan with its inclusion.

The amendment was put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Brunsdon, M Clark, R Clark, J Davies, Delemare, Dowd, England, Harrison, Kangarani, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade, M Wade.

Voting against:- Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Bellows, Bennison, Blunden, Brand, Carpenter, Clarke, Cleary, Corbridge, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Davis, Duke, Dunning, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, E Heron, J Heron, Hoare, Holding, Hopkins, Kidd, Levitt, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reid, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Steele, Thierry, Thorne, Tipp, C Ward.

The amendment was lost – 13 in favour, 42 against.

Item 4 (1 July 2020) – COVID-19 Recovery – Heath and Leisure

Cllrs Rackham and J Davies highlighted the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council's leisure centres, particularly with regard to lost income, and questioned the continuation of the ongoing Health and Leisure Review in its current form.

The substantive motion of the reports of Cabinet meetings held on 6 May, 3 June and 1 July 2020 was put to the vote.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

Note – Cllrs Lane and Tungate were unable to vote on this item due to technical issues.

82 QUESTIONS

There were none.

83 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

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

- Cllr Brand to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on Camping in the Forest.
- Cllr Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr J Heron, on the review of NFDC assets.
- Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services, Cllr Hoare, on Salvation Army collection bins.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr J Heron, on the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances.

- Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services, Cllr Hoare, on the progress of reducing the Council's carbon footprint.
- Cllr Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on support for cultural industries in the New Forest.
- Cllr A Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on support for Council staff during COVID-19.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Cleary, on the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness services.

Note – a copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

84 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Thierry be appointed to serve on the Planning Committee in place of Cllr Duke.

CHAIRMAN



BY EMAIL:

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP

Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP

Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

My Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: 06 July 2020

Dear Sirs

Camping in the New Forest (CITF)

It is with great concern that I feel it necessary to bring to your attention the implications of the decision taken by **Camping in the Forest (CITF)** to close all their campsites in 2020. I am sure you are aware that CITF are a company formed by a partnership of Forestry England, an agency of the Department of Environment Food & Rural Affairs. In total they operate 16 campsites in the United Kingdom of which 10 are located in the New Forest.

The 10 New Forest campsites provide a very significant contribution to the local economy. Our estimate of the impact on the local economy from lost discretionary guest expenditure (50% occupancy of 3105 pitches over the 87 days between 4th July and 28th September) is a "conservative" **£16 million**, which is a staggeringly large figure. If you then add the cost of the associated loss of local employment, supply chain costs, their own revenue (a large proportion also spent locally by their staff), the impact is much greater.

The decision not to open the 10 New Forest campsites is both bizarre and irresponsible given the situation we all face at this time, particularly as our community tries to recover from the devastation of the pandemic. In addition, the risks to the natural environment from uncontrolled wild camping in this special environment is also of great concern. Therefore, the decision has the potential not just to be a disaster for the local tourism and hospitality industry, at this most difficult of times, but also threatens the special characteristics of the forest itself and the quality of life of everyone who lives here.

CITF's Board made their decision without any engagement with us as the local authority. We therefore have had no opportunity to see if we could have supported the operation in any way. Our understanding is that their financial appraisal was based upon a very pessimistic cost benefit analysis of the additional operational implications for them in a COVID-19 marketplace which we are not certain related to the reality of the situation. We are witnessing a particularly high level of visitor numbers to the New Forest and surrounding areas at this time, and it is important they are able to utilise facilities like managed campsites, avoiding a potentially greater adverse impact created by their closure.

We are keen to work with our local partners (who are also cc'd into this letter) to find solutions. So, I ask that you use whatever pressures are available to you to bring to bear on the company to reconsider their decision. This is a critical moment for everyone who cares about the visitor economy in the New Forest and the very fabric of the forest's cultural heritage.

newforest.gov.uk

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

Yours sincerely

Councillor Barry Rickman
Leader
New Forest District Council
Tel: 023 8028 5588
Email: barry.rickman@newforest.gov.uk

c.c. Julian Lewis MP
Sir Desmond Swayne MP
NPA
Forestry England
Go New Forest
Verderers

FULL COUNCIL – 6 JULY 2020 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Hilary Brand to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Barry Rickman

Will the Administration urgently support New Forest traders, cafes and publicans by putting pressure on Camping in the Forest to reverse their ban on opening their managed campsites this summer?

Their action will mean that more than 3,000 pitches across 10 campsites in the New Forest will remain closed until next year.

As a High Street trader in Lyndhurst, I fear this could have a huge impact on the local economy and cause "absolute Armageddon" of illegal campers and crowds turning up in the area in a way which could impact all of us who represent all of the wards throughout the Forest.

As the summer builds wild campers will continue to camp illegally, light bonfires, use the Forest as a toilet, leave piles of rubbish, and park where they like in ever increasing numbers.

We know of other campsites which are opening, with new restrictions such as the closure of toilet and shower blocks, and that Camping regulations mean that units already have to be six metres apart.

Answer:

The answer to this question was dealt with by the Leader of the Council under item 4 on the agenda – Leader's announcements. The detail of the answer is outlined below:-

I wish to outline the steps we have taken since we became aware that Camping in the Forest (CITF) had taken a decision to not open any of their 10 sites (over 3,000 pitches) in the New Forest during 2020.

I need to firstly say that the Council received no notification of this action by the company until it was public knowledge. I am also aware that none of the New Forest partners – Forestry England, the National Park Authority, the Verderers or Go New Forest (CITF are one of their members) – had received any earlier notification either.

I am disappointed with the company and I am concerned as to the impact that this action may have both on the New Forest economy - Our estimate of the impact on the local economy from lost discretionary guest expenditure (50% occupancy of 3105 pitches over the 87 days between 4th July and 28th September) is a "conservative" £16 million, which is a staggeringly large figure. If you then add the cost of the associated loss of local employment, supply chain costs, their own revenue (a large proportion also spent locally by their staff).

With the campsites closed it also has the potential to have a significant impact on the New Forest environment and community if camping visitors arrive and have no proper facilities to use.

Recognising the potential adverse impact this could have on the New Forest, I requested the Council's Chief Executive to engage with all partners, in addition to those mentioned earlier this includes both Hampshire County Council (Transport issues) and the Police (Anti Social behaviour issues) in order to try and mitigate all issues that may occur before any new arrangements can be put in place.

For Members' information, CITF are a company formed by a partnership of Forestry England, an agency of the Department of Environment Food & Rural Affairs. (in total they operate 16 campsites in the United Kingdom, of which 10 are situated in the New Forest.)

Given the relationship with Government and the potential significant impact on the local economy and tourism businesses I on behalf of all our partners have written to the 3 Secretaries of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as well as our two local MP's, who I have personally spoken to requesting that they use whatever pressures are available to them to bring to bear on the company to reconsider their decision.

This is a critical moment for everyone who cares about the visitor generated economy in the New Forest and the very fabric of the forest's cultural heritage.

I am happy to include my letter within the minutes of this meeting.

I will add that efforts are being made to identify whether in the medium term any other local operators could extend their operations to offer more campsite pitches. I am hopeful and will update members on the progress we can make with partners on providing this to offset the current loss of campsites, should CITF not reconsider their decision

Note – as a supplementary comment, Cllr Brand highlighted a petition in respect of this matter on Change.Org. She encouraged all councillors to sign the petition.

Question 2

From Cllr David Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Barry Rickman

A Member of Cabinet has been bold enough to question the purpose and effectiveness of Hampshire's Police & Crime Commissioner. Should the Leader of the Council now write to Government expressing the view that the post be abolished?

Answer:

No - I am sure the Government like this Council has more important issues to consider at this moment in time.

Note – in response to a supplementary question concerning the effectiveness of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Leader of the Council highlighted the recent funding secured by the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner to support organisations that provided support to victims of domestic abuse.

Question 3

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr Jeremy Heron

Would the Cabinet Member consider taking forward a suggestion from the Lib Dem group and provide a review of assets owned by NFDC? With a focus on unused areas of land and buildings that are not currently supporting one of our valued services? This will be to support the impact of COVID-19 without allowing residents and services to be affected?

Answer:

COVID-19 presents an unprecedented challenge to all local authorities. By Early May of this year, the Leader was looking to work across parties through the Task and Finish Groups to address the challenges and since then all four Groups have met. It is through that mechanism that we will format the correct and proportionate response rather than randomly throwing out the next thought that comes into someone's head.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on additional financial support arising from recent Government funding announcements, the Portfolio Holder welcomed a further financial award but looked forward to the specific details of this for New Forest District Council, before determining the impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Question 4

From Stephanie Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services, Cllr Alison Hoare

When can we expect the blanket ban on the Salvation Army collection bins to be lifted, given the contract is with NFDC, as its clear that the material originally destined for such bins, have been dumped nearby and elsewhere, creating hazardous waste and attracting vermin?

Answer:

The Salvation Army Trading Company, and the rest of the textile recycling sector, has had a difficult period during lockdown. These difficulties relate to keeping their bank collection staff safe and ensuring safety at sorting facilities which under normal circumstances involve a hand sorting process using staff in close proximity to each other. Importantly, the UK's textile recycling sector relies heavily on the export market, and several of those large overseas markets have been closed to imports in recent months, creating a significant drop in the market value of textiles worldwide. These factors combined to create a complete freezing of textile recycling supply chains.

The Council has been in regular contact with the Salvation Army Trading Company during this period, as they began to restart collections from around 10,000 full banks across the UK. Almost all the Salvation Army banks on NFDC land were emptied during June, although they remained closed to allow the contractor to deal with the backlog of material. The Salvation Army have advised that banks will be reopened very shortly, and regular collections will recommence.

Note – in response to a supplementary question concerning other income streams, the Portfolio Holder reported briefly on the increase in new garden waste collection customers.

Question 5

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr Jeremy Heron

I understand that the COVID-19 lockdown has had a negative impact on the Council's finances. However, this cannot be an excuse to cut further services for the most vulnerable people in our district. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm to me now that the Council will look to borrow to invest in creating economic growth across the District rather than using budget cuts as the first port of call?

Answer:

I refer you to my earlier answer, we are not proposing to make ad-hoc decisions in an attempt to grab the headlines. We will work through all the options within the Task and Finish Groups and deliver a reasoned and sound Medium Term Financial Plan.

Question 6

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services, Cllr Alison Hoare

Not counting the changes the Council has imposed due to the COVID-19 Crisis please can the Portfolio holder give me an update on the progress of the actions the authority has committed to do to reduce its carbon footprint?

Answer:

Thank you for your question, we can all see for ourselves the difference people not travelling has had on our air quality, and during the lockdown our air quality monitoring systems identified a significant improvement in air quality in the areas that we monitor. Unfortunately we cannot take any credit for that, but the results show what can be achieved if people don't travel. Whilst the priorities of this Council have been to try and continue with services where possible during the last few months what is clear is that all of the Council's support staff can now fully work from home due to our previous investment in IT which in itself reduces the need to travel to and from work so often. I believe this will continue to be the case with less people needing to travel to work once we return to normal.

At the start of the lockdown we had just introduced Electric vehicles and replaced many of our petrol driven hand tools such as strimmers with electric versions. These have held up well during the last 4 months but are still in the evaluation period for the remainder of this summer.

I am committed to reducing our carbon footprint and as you are aware as you have been fully involved we are reviewing in line with the expected guidance arising from the soon to be published Environment Bill the type of refuse and recycling service that we provide to our residents. I am hopeful that this will allow our residents to recycle more and allow us to be able to give out a clearer message on what can and can't be recycled.

Note – in response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that regular updates would continue to be made to all councillors on the Council's progress in reducing its carbon footprint.

Question 7

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Barry Rickman

There is a great desire to take this opportunity to reset our services, community and society at this time with a wellbeing agenda to include a green agenda and investment in the arts and culture. For instance a solar farm that supports cultural projects or outdoor cinema nights to support the leisure centres. Will the Council join me in lobbying for support for the cultural industries in the area, many of whom have fallen through the cracks of available funding for this difficult time and to include a green agenda in our attempts to rebuild our district?

Answer:

Most people know my support for the Arts and the very good things they deliver for our society. Therefore I am delighted to see today that the Government is providing extra funding to Arts, Culture and Heritage. We will look at the details and assess what that means for us in due course.

We have established Task & Finish Groups of councillors to enable us to engage with all within our community including local arts and culture organisations. This will enable us all to gain an understanding of what the impact has been from Covid 19 on the community. By September we hope to have completed a position statement that will enable us as a Council not only to better understand but link our plans including a budget to all our priorities, including the green environment. I believe in approaching our community impact assessments in this way all members will be better informed in supporting the Council's approach.

Note – in response to supplementary question on Arts appearing across all Portfolio performance targets, the Leader of the Council welcomed this suggestion via the Task and Finish Group process.

Second Questions

Question 8

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

Can I ask what support there has been for Council staff over the past few months in these unprecedented times with their roles and work/life balance? They have been amazing support for Councillors and residents alike.

Answer:

There has been a wealth of information available through Forestnet including links to other websites such as MIND where employees can complete their own short self assessment of how they are doing and get tips on how to look after their own wellbeing. We have a dedicated page on Forestnet on the HR pages for Mental Health with many links to other organisations who can offer support.

Managers have been encouraged to stay in touch with their staff on a regular basis if they are working from home. Good communication being the key to ensuring staff don't feel isolated.

In operational areas we have ensured that robust risk assessments have been undertaken and in some areas changes to working practices have had to be introduced in order to keep staff safe. That has also happened in the offices with Perspex screens being introduced at reception areas as an example.

For most of leisure we have supported them through topping up the furlough grant.

Our HR team have been running numerous courses during lockdown – To enable all members to see the detail I will ask for a table of all sessions run and the number of staff who attended to be added to the minutes of this meeting. Within these sessions a key focus has been on mental health awareness including the training of 10 more mental health first aiders. But we have also tried to support managers by providing them with courses such as managing teams remotely.

Course title	Number of sessions	Number attended
Mental Health Awareness for Managers	2	10
Wellbeing & Mindfulness techniques	2	23
Mental Health First Aider	1	10
Managing employees remotely	3	9
Brief Bite Mental Health Awareness for managers	1	TBC
Brief Bite Embracing Equality & Diversity	1	7
Brief Bite Homeworking	1	10
Brief Bite Managing Performance	1	8
Brief Bite Sickness & Absence Management	1	6
Brief Bite Performance Reviews on the Hub	2	TBC
Excel Introduction	4	32
Excel Intermediate (external)	3	24
Dealing with difficult behaviour and situations	1	TBC
Developing your leadership brand	1	TBC
Delegation and Motivation	1	TBC

Question 9

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Jill Cleary

I understand that the COVID-19 lockdown has had a negative impact on the Council's finances. However, this cannot be an excuse to cut further services for the most vulnerable people in our district. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm to me now that support for homeless people, and those facing homelessness, across the New Forest will not be cut?

Answer:

The Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy of 2019 makes a number of significant pledges to support homeless households in our District. Never before has so much been done to support the most vulnerable in our communities and the Council is at the forefront of this important work. We have, for the first time, employed our own Homelessness Support Workers who provide direct support to the most vulnerable homeless households. We have created more of our own temporary accommodation which provides a better alternative to the use of external B&B and during the course of this financial year, we plan to bring on board a number of new additional facilities for this purpose.

Our partnership working with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies, through the Homelessness Multi Agency Forum, places us in an excellent position to ensure that there is joined-up thinking to finding solutions to the many problems that our homeless households often face.

Members will know how passionate I am to ensure that we do everything we can to help those who find themselves without a home and I believe that the wide range of measures that we have implemented has made an enormous difference to their lives.

We know that the government has pledged financial support to help local authorities end rough sleeping and provide greater support to vulnerable homeless households and already, we have benefited from these funding announcements.

Members, this Council will continue to deliver on all the pledges set out in our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy of 2019 and I will continue to ensure that we do the right thing and support those people who are less fortunate than ourselves. Everyone deserves a home and I know that the District Council will do everything it can to deliver on this key priority.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the use of hotels as part of the Council's response to homelessness during the height of the pandemic, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that some hotels were still being used although this was being phased out as the hospitality sector began reopening.

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