

2 DECEMBER 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 2 December 2020

- * Cllr Barry Rickman (Chairman)
- * Cllr Edward Heron (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Diane Andrews
- * Jill Cleary
- * Michael Harris

Councillors:

- * Jeremy Heron
- * Alison Hoare
- * Mark Steele

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden
Steve Clarke
Anne Corbridge
Keith Craze
Steve Davies
Jan Duke
Barry Dunning
Allan Glass

Councillors:

David Hawkins
Martyn Levitt
Alan O'Sullivan
Alvin Reid
Joe Reilly
Derek Tipp
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Rob Beere, Alan Bethune, Louise Evans, Sara Hamilton,
Grainne O'Rourke, Colin Read, Manjit Sandhu, James Smith, Ryan Stevens,
Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom

Apologies:

There were no apologies for absence received from Cabinet Members.

143 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020, be confirmed and signed.

144 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

145 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

146 COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY - REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council reported on the latest progress with the Council's response to and recovery from COVID-19.

In a year like no other, the news of an approved vaccine for COVID-19 was welcomed. Following the end of the national lockdown, New Forest District along with its other Hampshire and neighbouring Dorset authorities, had found itself in tier two restrictions.

The Council would be deploying trained COVID Safety Ambassadors from 2 December, to assist local businesses and communities to understand the latest local tier guidance. To support communities further, much like over both lockdown periods, the Council's Local Response Centre would be ready to respond across the Christmas period.

From 3 December, the Council's five health and leisure centres and Dibden Golf Course would re-open. The Leader placed on record his thanks to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing and the wider team for the work across these areas, particularly in making them COVID safe and secure.

Looking to business as usual, the Leader reported on the recent Safer New Forest Webinar and positive discussions on how to best support the most vulnerable in the local community. In housing, the Council's first Shared Ownership homes would soon be made available at Mulberry Gardens, Blackfield.

In relation to the local economy, the Kickstart Scheme continued to be promoted by the Council in partnership with New Forest Business Partnership. 18 placements had been identified at the Council across a range of service areas. It was confirmed that the Council had paid over £2m to over 1,300 businesses since launching the Local Restrictions Business Support Scheme in November.

Looking to the Council's own finances, the Comprehensive Spending Review was delivered last week, with the overriding message to local government being that there were tougher times ahead for unprotected areas of public spending. However, the Council was very grateful for the financial assistance and support across a range of Government schemes. This included the positive news that there would be no Business Rate Reset in 2021/22, which allowed the Council to continue to retain its growth above the baseline.

In summary, the Leader highlighted the need to have to prepare for a very different Christmas, but with the hope of a successful vaccine, the Council would have the ambition to move forward and continue to deliver for the needs of the community throughout 2021. The Leader expressed his thanks to the Deputy Leader, all Members, the Chief Executive and all Council staff for their hard work in an unprecedented year.

147 COVID-19 RECOVERY - LOCAL ECONOMY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted and that the ongoing initiatives and actions to date and in respect of the second lockdown as outlined in the report be endorsed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader and Corporate Affairs / Economic Development

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and alongside the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, placed on record their thanks to all the councillors who engaged in the work of the Task and Finish Group. Many types of businesses engaged with the Group and much of the work would continue as the New Forest emerged from the national lockdown into tier two restrictions. In due course, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development would meet with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on digital connectivity in the New Forest, as one example of taking forward the findings of the Group.

In relation to the impact on the hospitality industry, the Leader of the Council referred to the work of Go New Forest in supporting local businesses, also working in partnership on the delivery of the grants across all New Forest communities.

148 PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN S157 HOUSING ACT 1985 TO RESTRICT ONWARD DISPOSALS OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES SOLD UNDER THE RIGHT TO BUY (RTB) IN DESIGNATED RURAL AREAS, NATIONAL PARK AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY WITHIN THE NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL ADMINISTRATIVE AREA**RESOLVED:**

That the draft policy be approved for consultation purposes.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Housing Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted that the proposed initiative would ensure that the scarce Council housing in the rural areas of the New Forest remained available for those who lived and worked in those rural areas, once sold under the right to buy. Furthermore, this would promote sustainable and thriving communities and supports the wider ambitions of the Council's Housing Strategy adopted in 2018, placing housing need at the heart of the initiative.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the report, particularly in supporting key workers in the New Forest villages.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure spoke in support of the recommendations and recognised the many challenges faced by the Council as both a Housing Authority and Local Planning Authority. Whilst the Council could not make these homes affordable forever, it could use this mechanism to make them available to local people forever, delivering for those who are local that help build those local communities.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development endorsed the report in supporting local young people living and working in the New Forest.

149 MITIGATION FOR RECREATIONAL IMPACTS ON NEW FOREST EUROPEAN SITES - DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) "Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites" be published and subject to a six-week period (or equivalent) of public consultation; and
- (b) That prior to publication, the final editing of the draft document (attached in Appendix 1 to the report) be agreed by the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Infrastructure.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted that the Draft Supplementary Planning Document, subject to consultation, would provide guidance on how the Council would mitigate the impact of development on protected sites. Particular attention was drawn to the new format of splitting out individual projects from the policy to allow flexibility within the document.

150 ICT STRATEGY AND BUDGET UPDATE

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the ICT Strategy and Budget Update detailed in the report, including an overall reduction in forecast expenditure to £2.174m, (Table 2 at 9.3) be supported; and
- (b) That the rephrasing of the budget as demonstrated in Table 2 at 9.3, be reflected in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted that had the Council not invested in ICT as part of its overall ICT Strategy, it would have been in a very different place, particularly throughout the response to COVID-19. Working remotely, holding meetings online and serving the community without occupying the Council's buildings for large periods of time had been hugely successful. Further updates had also been delivered in the form of the telephony system and website.

Looking ahead, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the constantly changing and evolving landscape of technology. The Council needed to continue to invest to stay ahead of the curve and deliver for the community in a cost effective way.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure was very pleased to see the schedule for replacement and upgrade of planning and environmental health ICT systems, which would bring about both improvements to internal processes and the use of systems by members of the public.

151 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund (section 4), Capital (section 5) and HRA, (section 6) be noted; and
- (b) That the distribution of £107,308 to the Town and Parish Councils on the basis of £1.50 per band D property (2021/22 tax base) in support of the financial pressures faced by each Council as a result of the Coronavirus, be supported.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted the ever changing nature of financial planning at a time where restrictions had changed a number of times throughout the year. Positive news was announced that the first application to the Government in respect of the sales, fees and charges income schemes had been successful. This equated to £1.399m of financial support for which the Council was very grateful. The Council remained in a strong financial position and although facing changes and variations, was well placed to continue delivering for the community.

Particular attention was drawn to the recommendation in relation to the support to Town and Parish Councils, across the whole of the District. This commitment recognised the financial pressures COVID-19 has caused for all communities.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing spoke in support of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, and the Chief Finance Officer for working closely on dealing with the financial impact to health and leisure of COVID-19.

152 COUNCIL TAX 2021/22 - SETTING THE TAX BASE**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommends to Full Council:-

- (a) That the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2021/22 be approved; and
- (b) That pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2021/22 be as follows and as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report:-

PARISH/TOWN	TAX BASE 21/22
Ashurst & Colbury	926.3
Beaulieu	513.1
Boldre	1,059.8
Bramshaw	340.4
Bransgore	1,825.0
Breamore	180.1
Brockenhurst	1,895.9
Burley	792.9
Copythorne	1,221.0
Damerham	239.5
Denny Lodge	164.8
East Boldre	383.2
Elingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	619.8
Exbury & Lepe	119.4
Fawley	4,603.5
Fordingbridge	2,353.2
Godshill	227.8
Hale	265.4
Hordle	2,417.8
Hyde	512.5

Hythe & Dibden	7,406.1
Lymington & Pennington	7,483.2
Lyndhurst	1,472.8
Marchwood	2,057.7
Martin	197.2
Milford on Sea	2,853.8
Minstead	372.3
Netley Marsh	816.1
New Milton	10,515.3
Ringwood	5,404.3
Rockbourne	167.3
Sandleheath	276.6
Sopley	391.1
Sway	1,706.1
Totton & Eling	9,405.1
Whitsbury	101.1
Woodgreen	251.2
Whole District	71,538.7

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report as a required exercise each year ahead of the budget and Council Tax setting in February. It was noted that the impact of COVID-19 had resulted in an increase in Council Tax Reduction awards, with revised collection rates also factored into the calculations. These were the primary reasons for a relatively static tax base rather than the modest increase normally seen.

153 ADDITIONAL MEETING DATE 2021

RESOLVED:

That the following additional meeting date in 2021, be agreed:-

- 10.00 am, Wednesday 17 February 2021

CHAIRMAN