

3 FEBRUARY 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 3 February 2021

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

Councillors:

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

*Present

Councillors:

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

In attendance:

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden
Hilary Brand
Steve Clarke
Anne Corbridge
Keith Craze
Steve Davies
Arthur Davis
Barry Dunning
David Harrison
David Hawkins
Maureen Holding

Councillors:

Christine Hopkins
Martyn Levitt
Alexis McEvoy
Alan O'Sullivan
Neville Penman
Alvin Reid
Joe Reilly
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Ann Sevier
Derek Tipp
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Alan Bethune, Tim Davis, Grainne O'Rourke, Colin Read, Daniel Reynafarje, Manjit Sandhu, Leida Smith, Ryan Stevens, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received from Cabinet Members.

154 CAPTAIN SIR TOM MOORE

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the Council was flying the flag at Appletree Court at half mast, in respect of the passing of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

155 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020, be confirmed and signed.

156 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

For transparency purposes, the following Cabinet Members declared non-pecuniary interests in item 7 – Community Grants 2021/22, considered at minute 161 below:-

- Cllr E Heron, by virtue of his active involvement with the Fordingbridge and District Community Association. Cllr E Heron concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.
- Cllr J Heron, by virtue of his friendship with the Chairman of Forest Forge Theatre Company. Cllr J Heron concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.
- Cllr Harris, by virtue of his role as a trustee of New Forest Heritage Centre. Cllr Harris concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.

The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members of the Cabinet under Section 33 (2) (d) of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them to speak and to vote on item 10 – Members' Allowances – Scheme to Apply from 1 April 2021, considered at minute 164 below. This item was the subject of a recommendation to the Full Council.

157 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

158 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.

The start to 2021 had seen someone admitted to hospital every 30 seconds in England with coronavirus. The importance of staying home and reducing contact with others remained the best action everyone could take to save lives.

With 200 people being vaccinated every minute and jobs given to nearly 10 million people, there was light at the end of the tunnel. The Leader welcomed the many wonderful stories of how the New Forest community were pulling together to support each other, including help with the online booking of appointments. The UK was well on course to offer 15 million jobs to the most vulnerable by mid February.

The Leader and Cabinet placed on record their thanks to all the NHS staff who were part of the vaccination programme locally, and to the many volunteers who continued to offer invaluable support and assistance.

In terms of the Council, there were currently three staff with coronavirus and five staff self isolating, out of the total 1,234 employees. In addition, there were nine staff who were clinically extremely vulnerable and unable to work from home.

Staff continued to work tirelessly, with a further £13.4M paid out to local businesses through the Government backed business support schemes during the Winter lockdown. The Food and Safety Team visited 105 supermarkets and other food retailers in the past couple of weeks to support them with continuing to implement Covid measures. 37 other premises, such as garden centres and builders merchants were also visited, to offer advice.

The Council continued to work alongside health colleagues to set up vaccine and testing sites, and ensuring the clinically vulnerable could access food shopping, medicines and befriending services. The Council continued to provide its day to day normal services.

It was reported that last week, the Local Tracing Service went live in the New Forest District, alongside a bid being put forward for a community testing site at Totton Health and Leisure Centre for critical and essential workers.

The Leader encouraged residents to look at the information on the Council's website for how the Council may be able to help. The Leader and Cabinet recognised that the community and businesses of the New Forest all did so well during 2020 to come together to support the local economy, protect jobs and enable the general wellbeing of residents.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services reported on the progress of the Greener Housing Task and Finish Group, lead by the Chairman of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel. There was a clear direction at recent meetings to bring greener housing initiatives to Council tenants, especially those on lower incomes. The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report on the recent award of over £250,000 from Central Government to install 50 heat pumps in tenants' homes where there was no mains gas supply. This would make a huge difference to these homes and lead to a reduction in energy bills for tenants. The work of the Task and Finish Group continued, and it was anticipated that a Greener Housing Strategy would be brought forward in due course.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development reported in more detail on the grants to businesses in the New Forest. Approximately half of the funds reported by the Leader of the Council had been distributed under the discretionary grants schemes organised by the Council, assisting those smaller businesses not covered by some of the earlier Government lead initiatives.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services confirmed that the take your litter home campaign in the Summer of 2020 had resulted in a reduction of over 10 tonnes of litter throughout the Summer on the beaches within the District. It was hoped that this progress would continue into 2021, with a focus on reducing litter from cars.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing placed on record his thanks to those people supporting the efforts at Applemore Leisure Centre for vaccinations, and it was hoped that positive news would soon be received in relation to the bid for a testing site at Totton.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure reported on the Government award of £13.4M for repairs to the Redbridge Causeway, a vital link in this part of the District. In conjunction with Hampshire County Council funding, a total of £25M would be committed to ensuring the availability of this route into the future.

159 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 Cabinet recommends to Council that:-

- (a) The restrictions set out in S157 of the Housing Act 1985 and the proposed policy at Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted; and
- (b) Executive Heads and Service Managers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, be authorised to make decisions on waivers set out in the Local Restrictions Policy.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

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 the positive consultation responses on the implementation of the policy, which would help preserve the remaining Council properties in those specified areas, for people with a local connection.

Portfolio Holders emphasised their support for this important initiative, particularly in assisting residents in the rural areas of the New Forest, promoting the opportunity to live and work locally.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure highlighted an additional benefit of the proposed policy, in giving confidence to rural parishes to consider the District Council as a reliable provider to work with to deliver affordable housing schemes locally.

160 FREEPORTS BID**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet agree that the Council support the bid to Government for the creation of a Freeport within the Solent and that the Leader of the Council write a letter confirming NFDC support to the bid.

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 Leader of the Council welcomed the discussions at recent Overview and Scrutiny Panels on this issue, alongside the continued engagement with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership. It was hoped that the initiative would support the economic regeneration of the area of the New Forest through to Havant. This also covered Southampton, the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth. It was confirmed that the bid included the major ports of Southampton, Portsmouth and Marchwood, together with the airport at Eastleigh. A successful bid would potentially create 52,000 jobs for the future.

A draft letter confirming the Council's support for the bid had been included as an appendix to the report. The final version of that letter is attached to these minutes.

The Portfolio Holder emphasised this was the beginning of the process, and it was anticipated that there would be stiff competition for these bids. If successful, the long term benefits to residents, particularly in the East of the District and along the waterside, were significant. Training and skills opportunities could be presented and the overall scheme had the opportunity to level up areas of the New Forest and bring wider benefit to the South and UK economy as a whole.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development endorsed the report and hoped the bid would be successful. Working with local partners on this issue was likely to present opportunities to work together on other initiatives and bring the wider benefits of partnership working.

161 COMMUNITY GRANTS 2021/22**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Community Grant awards, totalling £127,000 in revenue grants and £80,300 in capital grants, as set out in Appendix 1, and in more detail in Appendix 2, be approved for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2021/22;
2. That the Cabinet support the proposal to bring grants to the Care Groups into scope of the Grants Panel for their task and finish process during 2021, for consideration in the 2022/23 budget, noting historic arrangements will continue for 2021/22; and
3. That the Cabinet note the intent to publish a joint Portfolio Holder Decision Notice to confirm the Service Level Agreements to enable the continuation of the transportation themed grants across the District.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Community Affairs.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

For transparency purposes, the following Cabinet Members declared non-pecuniary interests in this item:-

- Cllr E Heron, by virtue of his active involvement with the Fordingbridge and District Community Association. Cllr E Heron concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.
- Cllr J Heron, by virtue of his friendship with the Chairman of Forest Forge Theatre Company. Cllr J Heron concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.
- Cllr Harris, by virtue of his role as a trustee of New Forest Heritage Centre. Cllr Harris concluded that he would not speak or vote on this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader of the Council placed on record his thanks to the Members involved in the process for identifying grant awards.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted the challenge for Members of the Task and Finish Group in interviewing applicants virtually. There was full and robust discussion over all the grants which demonstrated the care of Members in ensuring a spread of grants across the community. Portfolio Holders welcomed this diversity across the community in supporting the arts, sport, mental health, people with disabilities, young people, families, schools, charities, museums and beyond.

162 ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet agree and recommend to Council that the schedule of projects as included at appendix 2 and 3 be approved within the 2021/22 budget.

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 and welcomed the recent discussion at the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Whilst the debate on individual projects would be taken forward by the relevant Portfolio Holders, this was a financial paper to set out the necessary expenditure.

The Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel, having recognised the financial nature of the paper, welcomed further debate through the relevant Task and Finish Group on the closure of Calshot public conveniences, reaffirming her opposition to this closure.

163 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/22**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet agree and recommend to Council that the Capital Strategy 2021/22 be approved, including the adoption of the MRP statement, as follows:-

“For capital expenditure that has been incurred, and which has given rise to a CFR, the MRP policy for expenditure other than that incurred on investment property and dwellings, shall be to charge revenue an amount equal to the depreciation of any asset financed by loan. The MRP policy specific to investment properties and dwellings financed by loan, shall be to charge revenue an amount equivalent to the sum of borrowing utilised, over a repayment period of 50 years.”

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 technical paper required on an annual basis, to set out the estimates for financing requirements and how borrowing would be repaid.

164 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2021**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommend to Council that the current scheme of members' allowances be made as the scheme to apply from 1 April 2021.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

N/A.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members of the Cabinet under Section 33 (2) (d) of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them to speak and to vote on this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and highlighted it as an annual procedural issue.

CHAIRMAN

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Brian Johnson
Chairman
Solent LEP
1000 Lakeside North Harbour
Western Road
Portsmouth
PO6 3EN

My Ref:
Your Ref:

Date: 03 February 2021

Dear Brian

I am writing to express the wholehearted support of New Forest District Council for the Freeport bid which is to be submitted by Solent LEP.

The Council recognises the huge potential a successful Freeport bid has to transform the social and economic fortunes of the local area of the New Forest, the Solent and the county of Hampshire. The bid has the potential to create thousands of new jobs and skills, together with providing local SME businesses with a fantastic opportunity to develop and grow.

This is particularly welcome at this very difficult time, as we all look towards recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The generous tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures and promise of continued Government support offered by Freeport status would all combine to make “the Waterside” a highly attractive place for investors and developers, along with those who will ultimately manufacture and operate on the site.

The resulting projects will, in turn, create countless opportunities for skilled and ambitious supply chain businesses. We also see it as a significant catalyst for the ambition to lead a ‘Green recovery’ that we believe the Solent Freeport Bid can support, with unique solutions to the net zero carbon emissions agenda, within the special environmental location of the New Forest and the Solent.

The ability to utilise the retention of our own local business rates for the investment in infrastructure and connectivity needs, both locally to the New Forest and within the region, is recognised as a critical requirement of the bid. As the responsible Billing Authority for Business Rates within “the Waterside” connected tax site cluster, we will utilise this ability to fully support the Solent Freeport Bid, including, if necessary, the pooling of resources for investments aligned with the Freeport Bid, whilst recognising that any pooling would be agreed multilaterally between all the Local Billing Authorities in coordination with the Solent Freeport Board.

It is hoped that the Solent Freeport Bid is successful.

newforest.gov.uk

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Rickman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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