

25 MARCH 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 25 March 2021

* Cllr Alexis McEvoy (Chairman)

* Cllr Alan Alvey (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Fran Carpenter
* Keith Craze
* Sandra Delemare
Mahmoud Kangarani

Councillors:

* Martyn Levitt
* Alan O'Sullivan
Beverley Thorne
* Derek Tipp

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Barry Dunning
Michael Harris
David Hawkins
Jeremy Heron

Officers Attending:

Alan Bethune, Bob Jackson, Andy Rogers, Ryan Stevens, Claire Upton-Brown and Sally Igra

Apologies

81 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 would be submitted to the next meeting.

82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by any member in connection with any agenda item.

83 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the public participation period.

84 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS AND PERFORMANCE DASHBOARDS

The Panel received an update from the Portfolio Holders on developments within their Portfolio areas and with reference to the Performance Dashboards. The following points were raised:

Cllr Heron:

- Continued commercial investment. Additional acquisition of property in New Milton at a cost of just over £500,000 with an approximate yield of 6.6%.
- Crow Lane development was progressing with the original planning permission with some minor changes.
- ICT – numerous projects going forward, including completion of the Council's website, updating pages and payments.
- Financial position – good, with challenges for the future.
- The effect of the pandemic on property lettings meant that some smaller rents had been deferred.
- Format of finance/ budget scrutiny meetings will be discussed at June Panel.
- Depot project deferred pending Waste Strategy outcome.

Cllr Harris

- Property Investments helping residential and local economy whilst providing income.
- Broadband – challenging but some progress on local projects, and guidance on provision, and regularly lobbying Government, and work with NPA and LEP
- Help for High Streets - £223k support funding announced. Arranging event involving parish councils, business associations and retailers to combat and capitalise on internet shopping.
- NFBP working improved – Community Interest Company (CIC) set up and incorporated every local business automatically into the Partnership.

85 FINANCIAL UPDATE - PRESENTATION

The Panel received an update on:

- the Council's Financial Position; and
- a summary of the latest Business Grants administered by the Council

The slides from the presentation can be found on the Council's website with the agenda. The presentation covered the following main topics:

- Update on Finances
- Latest Business Support
- Test and Trace Support payments
- Restart grants

- Business Rate reliefs
- Welcome Back Fund.
- Budget recap

A Task and Finish Group will be established to act as a sounding board for the proposals to make the most of the Welcome Back Fund funding across the District. A good geographical spread of Group members would be needed. Members would be invited to serve on the Panel.

86 'BREATHING SPACE' DEBT RESPITE PROTECTION

The Panel received a presentation on the new 'Breathing Space' regulations, which come into force on 4 May 2021, and will provide debt respite protection.

The presentation covered:

- Eligibility and qualifying debts
- Process
- End of breathing space

A copy of the slides is attached to the agenda papers.

87 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

It was agreed that a Council Tax Task and Finish Group would be set up in due course, to comprise 6 members. Members would be invited to serve on the Group.

88 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel reviewed their Work Programme. The objectives for each item would be added to the work programme for the next meeting.

Members were encouraged to suggest any additional items to the Chairman or the clerk.

CHAIRMAN