

6 SEPTEMBER 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 6 September 2021

* Cllr Derek Tipp (Chairman)

* Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (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
* Allan Glass
* Andrew Gossage
* Michael Harris
* David Harrison
* David Hawkins

Councillors:

* Edward Heron
* Jeremy Heron
Alison Hoare
* Maureen Holding
Christine Hopkins
* Mahmoud Kangarani
Joshua Kidd
* Emma Lane
Martyn Levitt
* Alexis McEvoy
* Ian Murray
* 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:

Colin Read, Grainne O'Rourke, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cerasoli, R Clark, Crisell, England, Hoare, Hopkins, Kidd, Levitt, Reilly, Russell and J Ward.

30 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021, be confirmed.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

32 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Former Cllr Audrey Howe

The Chairman referred with great sadness to the recent passing of former NFDC Cllr Audrey Howe.

Audrey was first elected to the District Council in 1991, representing the Blackfield and Langley ward. Audrey served the Council for 12 years, holding the position of Chairman of the Council in 1998/1999.

Audrey served on many Committees, most notably the Environmental Services Committee from 1991 – 2001, and holding the position of Vice-Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee in 1995/96. Audrey also served on a number of Outside Bodies, representing the District Council on Age Concern Hampshire for eight years, whilst also taking a particular interest in Sport, Recreation and Leisure in the District. Audrey's daughter, Maureen Robinson went on to serve as a District Councillor.

The Chairman expressed his sincere condolences to Audrey's family and friends and placed on record the Council's thanks for the eminent service of Audrey.

Members of the Council paid tribute to Audrey.

Engagements

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:-

28 July 2021

Attended the Sculpture at Beaulieu event, at the invitation of Lord and Lady Montagu. The event featured more than 250 sculptures showcasing the work of over 50 international and national sculptors.

29 August 2021

Attended the Annual Commemoration of the New Forest Airfields Memorial, laying a wreath on behalf of the District.

23 July 2021

The Vice-Chairman attended the opening of Sandleheath Village Hall.

UK Emergency Services Day

The Chairman referred to UK Emergency Services Day, taking place on Thursday 9 September 2021. The Chairman, accompanied by the Leader of the Council would be raising the 999 flag to show the Council's support for the NHS and emergency services.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman placed on record his support of the UK's annual national emergency services day and recorded his sincere appreciation for the two million people who work and volunteer in the NHS and emergency services.

Civic Party Presentations

The Chairman presented the outgoing Chairman, Cllr Allan Glass and his consort with badges of their past offices.

The current Chairman and Vice-Chairman consorts were also welcomed to their positions for the 2021/22 year.

33 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

34 REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 September 2021 and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

Paragraph 4 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2021 Onwards

In response to concerns relating to the future financial position of the Council and any potential cuts to services, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services reiterated that the Council remained in a good and strong financial position, despite the challenges that the Council would no doubt face in the future. It remained the Cabinet's intention to continue to protect and enhance frontline services whilst dealing with budget deficits in new and innovative ways, through the Council's efficiency programmes and by securing investment opportunities such as the development of land at Crow Lane, Ringwood.

Paragraph 5 – Development of Land at Crow Lane, Ringwood

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services welcomed this opportunity as bringing forward employment opportunities in the locality of new housing development, supporting the Council's sustainability agenda. In addition, the 'Green Very Good' credentials of the build would also deliver over and above the requirements for greener housing. The revenue to the Council would also deliver much needed funds to continue to bridge future gaps in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

35 QUESTIONS

There were none.

36 NOTICE OF MOTION

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr M Wade moved the following motion:-

“This Council notes:

The findings of the IPCC report approved by 195 member governments state:-

- *That many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion, such as continued sea level rise, are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years.*
- *The evidence is clear that carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main driver of climate change, even as other greenhouse gases and air pollutants also affect the climate.*
- *The report projects that in the coming decades climate changes will increase in all regions.*
- *It also shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for approximately 1.1°C of warming since 1850-1900 and finds that averaged over the next 20 years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C of warming*
- *For 1.5°C of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons.*
- *The report shows at 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health.*
- *Climate change is affecting rainfall patterns. In high latitudes, precipitation is likely to increase, while it is projected to decrease over large parts of the subtropics. Changes to monsoon precipitation are expected, which will vary by region.*
- *Climate change is intensifying the water cycle. This brings more intense rainfall and associated flooding, as well as more intense drought in many regions.*
- *The report also shows that human actions still have the potential to determine the future course of climate. The evidence is clear that carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main driver of climate change, even as other greenhouse gases and air pollutants also affect the climate.*

This Council believes that:-

- *Stabilizing the climate will require strong, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reaching net zero CO₂ emissions.*
- *Limiting other greenhouse gases and air pollutants, especially methane, could have benefits both for health and the climate.*
- *That strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change.*

This Council therefore calls on the Cabinet to:-

- *Declare a 'Climate Emergency';*
- *Pledge to make the New Forest district carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;*
- *Report to full Council within six months setting out the immediate actions the Council will take to address this emergency and a plan to measure annual district wide progress towards meeting the 2030 target.*
- *Take into account carbon reduction actions in every aspect of its business*
- *Work with partners across the district and the region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans and drawing on local and global best practice.*
- *Actively lobby the Government to provide the additional powers and resources needed to meet the 2030 target."*

Cllr Osborne seconded the motion.

The Chairman confirmed that, in accordance with Standing Order 41, as the motion called on the Cabinet to take actions, it should stand referred to the Cabinet. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Cabinet would consider the motion at its next meeting in October 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the motion be referred to the Cabinet.

37 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

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

- Cllr Dowd to the Leader of the Council, Cllr E Heron on Equality and Diversity.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing, Cllr Steele on supporting the wellbeing of residents.
- Cllr M Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr E Heron, on the relocation of Afghan families in Hampshire.
- Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr S Davies on car parking in Totton.
- Cllr Kangarani to the Leader of the Council, Cllr E Heron on highway activities in the District.

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

38 REPORT OF THE APPOINTMENT PANEL - APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Leader of the Council moved the recommendations as set out in the report. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

A number of Members spoke in support of the appointment of the new Chief Executive having been involved in the recruitment process. It was considered that an outstanding candidate had been found who would add great value to the District Council in the coming years.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the appointment was permanent.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Kate Ryan as Chief Executive of New Forest District Council, be approved.

39 MEETING DATES

RESOLVED:

That meetings of the Council be held on the following dates in 2022/23 (Mondays at 6.30pm):-

16 May 2022 – Annual Council (already agreed)

11 July 2022

12 September 2022

10 October 2022

12 December 2022

20 February 2023

10 April 2023

22 May 2023 – Annual Council

40 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN

FULL COUNCIL – 6 SEPTEMBER 2021 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Philip Dowd to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Edward Heron

It is appropriate that the Council recognises its role to support people with disabilities by having a reference to Equality and Diversity in each major decision. What impression do you think a disabled person in the New Forest would get from nearly every published report containing the phrase 'There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising directly from this report'? How might the Council communicate its commitment to disabled residents more effectively?

Answer:

The Council takes its responsibilities with regards to its role in promoting equality and diversity in the workplace but also in the District as a whole very seriously. The Council has published corporate equality guidance for ensuring due regard is made to all members of our community, especially residents and employees with varying disabilities in its decisions. This guidance is available on Forestnet and covers how to ensure NFDC makes decisions that are inclusive to all residents and staff receive training to ensure they are kept up to date with changes in legislation. Officers will refer to this guidance when preparing their reports.

The section of each report titled Equality and Diversity is used to identify if the decision being made has a direct impact on certain sections of community or employees and the implications for that decision. Officers will refer to that guidance in deciding whether that is relevant to the report. I do think it is useful to have that section there even if the officers include in their report that there is no impact and that is quite rightly recorded because by having that step, it ensures officers give due regard when preparing their reports.

Note – in response to a supplementary question regarding the District Council as an Equal Opportunity Employer, the Leader referred to the minutes of the HR Committee and that the Council continued to strive to be an employer of choice, enriched by the diversity of its staff and councillors.

Question 2

From Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing, Cllr Mark Steele

Now the leisure centres are no longer managed by this authority, what strategy does the Portfolio Holder have for supporting the physical and mental well-being of residents, as covid restrictions have reduced? Especially considering the impact of such a positive summer of sport where many in the community of all ages were inspired by our incredible Olympic and Paralympic Athletes, and indeed the England men's Football Team? What can we do to help engage and provide opportunity for residents of all ages and in all corners of the District to get involved?

Answer:

We will shortly be starting the work on the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a Task and Finish Group will be set up after the community panel meeting next week. We will work with partners to focus on developing and importantly delivering a strategy that supports the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents. The chief medical officer has identified being physically active as one of the most important things that people can do for their overall health and wellbeing. This is important for all members of our communities but we know that there are some sections that are less active and we are working to improve participation in these sectors particularly. We are proud to see our residents excel in sports and parasports. We are equally proud of all the volunteers and grass roots organisations that have helped residents find their way to be active and we are pleased to support them in making this happen.

Note – in response to a supplementary question regarding the involvement of the Council's leisure centres in this process, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that Freedom Leisure, the Council's new partner in running and operating the leisure centres, would be a key partner in the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Question 3

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Edward Heron

We have seen reported an Afghan family relocated within the New Forest area and they are very welcome. Hampshire County Council have said they are working with the Home Office to help relocate displaced families across the County.

Can the Leader update us on the situation and whether we can expect other families to be relocated within the New Forest?

Answer:

We fully recognise the importance of supporting Afghan nationals who have worked alongside our British armed forces in Afghanistan with relocating to the UK, along with their families. We are already actively working with Hampshire County Council, the Home Office and partners as part of the governments national Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme, aptly named "Operation Warm Welcome" where all councils have been asked to secure a property to house a family. I am pleased to announce that we are one of the first councils in Hampshire to be supporting a family who we will be welcoming to the district in mid September, with all the necessary procedures and arrangements having been completed. We are in discussions to secure further properties to support more Afghan families and we hope to progress this soon. The government has recently announced the Afghan Citizen Resettlement scheme, and we will continue to work with our partners to support this scheme.

The property that is currently being made available is a private sector property, from an approach of a landlord that keenly wanted to help. It is important to recognise that we have a duty to those who have served and risked their lives for the safety of our country. Equally, we have duty to our own residents. Therefore it is important to make clear that the homes that have been offered have been made available from private sector owners for this specific purpose and it in no way detracts from our responsibility for housing our own residents in need of accommodation.

Note – in response to a supplementary question regarding partnership working, the Leader of the Council reassured Members that a priority needed to be a support network for those

arriving and the Council was working in partnership right across Hampshire and the South East. Across the South East, as at 1.00 pm on 6 September, 33 families had been settled, with 20 other offers awaiting matching.

Question 4

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr Steve Davies

Can the Portfolio Holder identify what the level of takings have been in the newly charged car parks in Totton compared to previous years (pre covid) and how much the meters cost to put in?

Answer:

Prior to 1st January 2021, parking in the two car parks were kept free as part of an agreement with Totton and Eling Town Council, the town council were making a contribution towards business rates for the car parks. However, no monies were received after October 2019 and in September 2020 the Portfolio holder took the decision to introduce charging in both car parks from 1 January 2021. The amount that had been paid in Business Rates up to that point was £28K.

Following the introduction of charging, parking meter machine income (which includes pay by phone) was £14,494.81 for the period ending August 2021. This gives an estimated annual income of about £25K.

In addition, a 'pro rata' allocation of parking clock income should be applied, giving an estimated clock income for both car parks of £66,720 based on allowing £398 for each short stay space and £158 for each long stay space (This figure is derived from dividing the short and long stay income overall by the number of spaces overall then apportioning an amount according to the number and type of each space in each car park – the 2 car parks have 120 long and 120 short stay spaces in total).

Overall predicted income for this calendar year from ticket machine and clock sales is therefore £25K + £66K = £91K for these two car parks.

The cost of installing 5 pay and display machines was £5K/machine = £25K. In addition, signage and lining etc was required giving a total cost of about £30K. All ticket machines are solar powered and have no mains connection.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on considering a break from charges, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that a number of free car parking days in the lead up to Christmas would be announced via the Town Council, offered by the District Council.

Question 5

From Cllr Mahmoud Kangarani to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Edward Heron

We often see highway activities or work being carried out by Hampshire County in our local area without the knowledge of local council or councillors.

Can the Leader of the Council look into this if communication between the interested parties including the District Council and Councillors can be improved?

Answer:

I would direct all councillors to the one.network website. This provides information on all programmed works on the highway, including non-emergency works by third-parties including utilities. If you register, for free, you can plot a geographical area, for example your Ward, and receive email alerts for all planned works, and the reference should you need to contact the organisation that does them.

I am aware though that there is a good working relationship between our operational Managers at NFDC and those at HCC and there is a dialog before works commence on the Highway if it is felt that those works would impact of the operation of District Council activities.