

7 JULY 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 7 July 2021

* Cllr Edward Heron (Chairman)

* Cllr Jill Cleary (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Diane Andrews
* Steve Davies
* Michael Harris

Councillors:

* Jeremy Heron
* David Russell
Mark Steele

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Ann Bellows
Geoffrey Blunden
Rebecca Clark

Councillors:

Philip Dowd
Allan Glass

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Alan Bethune, Steve Cook, Rebecca Drummond, Grainne O'Rourke, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Steele.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2021, be confirmed and signed.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

10 WESTOVER URGENT WORKS - MILFORD-ON-SEA - UPDATE REPORT**RESOLVED:**

That the completion of the urgent works and the latest expected financial contribution required from the Council (subject to successful confirmation and receipt of third-party funding), be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Environment and Coastal 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 achievement of completing the emergency works during a challenging year. Looking forward, the Council was working closely with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council in the development of a Christchurch Bay Strategy, covering the entire coastline from Hengistbury Head to Hurst Spit.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance highlighted the strong financial position of the Council's reserves which enabled the response during 2020. Whilst it was hoped that several funding areas would bring the final cost to the Council down, it was still anticipated that the Council's contribution would be in excess of £500k, which was not sustainable for a District Council. Looking forward, these type of projects would need to secure significant external funding.

11 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2020/21**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Annual Performance Statement for 2020/21, including the impact of Covid-19 on performance be noted;
2. That the provisional outturn of the General Fund revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21 be noted; and
3. That the provisional outturn of the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21, be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader/All.

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 placed on record his thanks to officers for all they had done this year, to achieve an exceptional outturn in exceptional circumstances. The day to day business of the Council had continued whilst areas responded to entirely new responsibilities to support the community.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance highlighted how exceptional it had been to set an Emergency Budget in September 2020. With revenue ceasing in areas such as health and leisure and car parking, the work to achieve this balanced Emergency Budget was significant. The outturn was now better than forecast, however the Council would need to continue to take a prudent approach through its Medium Term Financial Plan to ensure the Council's finances remained in good shape.

In response to a question on the achievements in the Economic Development Portfolio and whether the businesses the Council was in contact with in the District were those in receipt of additional restrictions grants, officers would clarify this information and provide a response in due course.

12 WORKSMART**RESOLVED:**

That, having noted the noted the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's comments on the Business Case and the HR Committee's endorsement of the 'Worksmart – Hybrid Working Policy', and their recommendation to Council that the new HR policy be approved, the report be supported.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader/All.

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 welcomed the response through the report to the desire expressed by staff to a new blend of hybrid working, and the natural shift in the way the country works on a national basis. He paid tribute to the Council's ICT investment and teams for enabling the Council to continue working throughout the pandemic.

It was noted that a twelve month review would take place to address many of the key drivers for change including the environmental impact of a reduction in full time office based staff, and the ability of the Council to recruit and retain high quality staff as an employer of choice.

In response to questions concerning officer availability for councillors, it was expected that adjustments would be needed to historic working practices. With the use of a Council device, Members could establish officer location and availability very quickly, and arrange suitable appointments.

The Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the pace at which this initiative had been brought forward.

CHAIRMAN