

1 SEPTEMBER 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 1 September 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

Sue Bennison

Geoffrey Blunden

Steve Clarke

Philip Dowd

Jacqui England

Councillors:

Allan Glass

David Hawkins

Alison Hoare

Malcolm Wade

Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Colin Read, Alan Bethune, Grainne O'Rourke, Andrew Smith, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Russell.

The Leader of the Council sent the Cabinet's well wishes to Cllr Russell who was self isolating following a positive coronavirus test.

13 AUDREY HOWE

The Leader referred with great sadness to the recent death of Audrey Howe, a former councillor and Chairman of New Forest District Council.

Audrey was first elected a councillor for the Blackfield and Langley Ward in 1991 and served for 12 years.

The Leader, on behalf of the Cabinet, expressed his sincere condolences to Audrey's family and friends for their loss.

14 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2021, be confirmed and signed.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

17 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council that the proposed Empty Homes Strategy be adopted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Housing and Homelessness 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 need to strike the correct balance in working with property owners to bring homes back into use. The range of powers identified in the strategy demonstrated the Council's ability to take action when needed. She also placed on record her thanks to the local media for publicising the strategy which had led to members of the public coming forward to assist the Council in this area.

18 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2021-2026

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- (a) Confirm support for the revised vision, objectives and actions; and
- (b) Delegate authority to the Executive Head for Planning, Regeneration and Economy to respond to the consultation on the Draft Partnership Plan 2021-2026 in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure introduced the report and welcomed the opportunity to work with partners to ensure the National Park was sustained for the future. The consultation sought to strengthen and set out clear priorities and actions whilst encouraging engagement with communities. The Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing looked forward to the opportunity for collaborating with partners on the wellbeing aspects of the plan.

In response to questions relating to the engagement of Town and Parish Councils in the plan, it was confirmed that this was addressed as part of the day to day work on delivery, with many options for engagement such as the recent Walking and Cycling Strategy. However, the Portfolio Holder was happy to pick this suggestion up as part of the consultation response to the National Park Authority.

19 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (BASED ON PERFORMANCE APRIL TO JULY 2021 INCLUSIVE)

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:-

- (a) notes the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund and Capital; and
- (b) recommends that Council approves additional budget provision of £300,000 for Housing Void works and notes the latest budget forecast, including £180,000 shortfall in rental income within the Housing Revenue Account.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services / All.

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 latest position with regard to the ongoing negotiations for the national pay award. Whilst this could change, the report reflected the current offer. The revised Health and Leisure budget was also highlighted, with a strong Council wide financial position for the current year.

The Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing highlighted the positive impact of the partnership arrangements with Freedom Leisure and the upcoming centre enhancement programme, delivered through these new arrangements.

20 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021 ONWARDS

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council:-

- (a) That the revised MTFP, as outlined within the report and appendices be adopted; and
- (b) That the reporting timeline as set out in section 8 be agreed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services / All.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and referred to the funding assumptions driven by the Business Rate Retention Scheme revisions, which would require review when further clarity from the Government was given. The Council remained committed to the effective and efficient delivery of services, and was keen to identify and explore options for partnering and collaboration with others where it would be to the benefit of New Forest residents and Tax Payers, through the County Deals process. Further details were expected as part of the Levelling Up White Paper.

In response to questions on any potential cuts to frontline services, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that it was the Council's policy not to reduce front line services, but to work in more innovative and new ways to deliver the efficiencies needed to protect and enhance services. One example of this innovation was highlighted as the Council's approach to commercial investment opportunities, evidenced on the Cabinet agenda with the potential development of land at Crow Lane, Ringwood.

21 DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT CROW LANE, RINGWOOD**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommends to Council:-

- (a) The allocation of £8,445,000 in funding to complete the project, this figure being inclusive of construction costs, supervision and marketing of the development as well as contingency;
- (b) To appoint the contractor identified in Confidential Appendix C as the preferred bidder to design and build the industrial and office units on land at Crow Lane, Ringwood; and
- (c) Commencement of marketing and letting of the units to potential tenants at the earliest opportunity.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services / Business, Tourism and High Streets.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism and High Streets introduced the report and highlighted the scale of the project as one of, if not the largest investment the Council had ever made, to the sum of £8.4 million. He welcomed the opportunity to provide employment space for businesses and their employees as the Council looked to grow the local economy out of the pandemic.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services welcomed the investment opportunity, which he considered would deliver in many ways, through local economic growth, employment, greener credentials and financially in the long run with returns to the Council.

The Leader of the Council endorsed the comments of Portfolio Holders and highlighted the project as an example of how the Council could generate alternative income streams whilst delivering economic benefits to local residents.

22 MEETING DATES FOR 2022/23**RESOLVED:**

That meeting dates for 2022/23 be agreed as follows (All Wednesdays commencing at 10.00 am):-

1 June 2022	7 December 2022
6 July 2022	1 February 2023
3 August 2022	1 March 2023
7 September 2022	5 April 2023
5 October 2022	3 May 2023
2 November 2022	

CHAIRMAN