

**2 FEBRUARY 2022**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 2 February 2022

\* Cllr Edward Heron (Chairman)

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

\* Diane Andrews  
\* Geoffrey Blunden  
\* Steve Davies

**Councillors:**

\* Michael Harris  
\* Jeremy Heron  
\* David Russell

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Ann Bellows  
Steve Clarke  
Philip Dowd  
Barry Dunning  
Richard Frampton

**Councillors:**

Alison Hoare  
Alan O'Sullivan  
Steve Rippon-Swaine  
Malcolm Wade  
Christine Ward

**Officers Attending:**

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Rachel Higgins, Grainne O'Rourke, Manjit Sandhu, Ryan Stevens, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

**Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence received from Cabinet Members.

**49 FORMER CLLR HENRY FORSE**

The Leader referred with great sadness to the recent passing of former Cllr Henry Forse. Henry represented the Bramshaw, Copythorne North and Minstead Ward from 2007 until he stood down in May 2011. Henry was a Member of the Employment, Health and Wellbeing Committee and the Environment Review Panel. He represented the District Council on the Local Government Association Coastal Issues Group.

The Leader recalled Henry's memorable election campaign leaflet which attracted national press coverage in 2007.

The Leader of the Opposition added his tributes to Henry.

**50 FORMER CLLR PAUL HICKMAN**

The Leader referred with great sadness to the recent passing of former Cllr Paul Hickman. Paul was first elected in February 2002 to the Pennington Ward and served as a District Councillor until 2011. Paul was a long standing Member of the Environment Review Panel before later becoming a Member of the Housing Review Panel and Planning Committee. He represented the District Council on a number of Outside Bodies, most notably the New Forest Road Safety Council and the New Forest Highway and Transport Advisory Panel.

The Leader spoke of Paul as an early pioneer of sustainability and alongside his wife were fierce campaigners in this area. The Leader sent his personal condolences to Paul's wife, friends and family.

The Leader of the Opposition added his tributes to Paul.

**51 LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER**

The Leader provided an update on the anticipated Government Levelling Up White Paper, expected to be published shortly.

It was clear that some of the themes in the paper would be welcomed. The Government's clear focus was on those areas with the greatest need. A national agenda for levelling up would offer the Council the opportunity to set the agenda for skills and jobs in the District. It was recognised that many communities in the New Forest had areas that required levelling up and investment. Wider scale levelling up would be a priority for the District's waterside communities such as Totton and Hythe. The Leader confirmed that proposals for these areas would be brought forward in due course, with a focus on skills and opportunities.

**52 MINUTES****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2021, be confirmed and signed.

**53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

The Leader of the Council, for transparency purposes declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 – Solent Freeport Site Specific Agreements, considered at minute 57 below. The interest concerned his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd, as appointed by the Council. He concluded that there were no common law reasons of bias or pretermination that precluded him from speaking and voting on this item.

The Leader of the Council, for transparency purposes declared that one of the recommended grants in item 7 – Community Grants 2022/23, considered at minute 58 below, was for an organisation that fell inside his District ward.

**54 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

**55 FINANCIAL MONITORING**

**RESOLVED:**

That the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund (section 4), Capital (section 5) and Housing Revenue Account (section 6) of the report, be noted.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

As set out in the report.

**KEY DECISION:**

No.

**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 identified the various changes and variances as part of the General Fund, Capital Expenditure and Housing Revenue Account (HRA). It was noted that the HRA continued to be challenging.

Cabinet Members were pleased to see the General Fund reporting very close to the original budget set in February 2021.

**56 AIR QUALITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) "Air Quality Assessments in New Development" be published and subject to a six-week period (or equivalent) of public consultation; and
- (b) That prior to publication, the final editing of the draft document (attached in Appendix 1 to the report) be agreed by the Executive Head for Planning, Regeneration and the Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

As set out in the report.

**KEY DECISION:**

Yes.

**PORTFOLIO:**

Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure.

**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 draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for consultation, which would seek to enhance the requirement for protecting air quality in the District. The SPD would bring about further guidelines for existing policies and encourage early engagement with developers, bringing mitigation to acceptable levels.

In response to comments made in relation to the cumulative impact on air quality caused by a series of individual developments, officers reassured the Cabinet that it was critical to look at this matter strategically and the SPD would seek to do this, remain consistent with relevant guidance and take into account all committed development.

**57 SOLENT FREEPORT - SITE SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Chief Executive be authorised to enter into Site Specific Agreements with landowners and the Solent Freeport Consortium Company, the terms of which are set out in the report and in the draft template at Appendix 1 of the report.

**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):**

The Leader of the Council, for transparency purposes declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. The interest concerned his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd, as appointed by the Council. He concluded that there were no common law reasons of bias or pretermination that precluded him from speaking and voting on this item.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Leader introduced the report and highlighted the report as a key step on the journey for the Solent Freeport. Through a series of approvals building on the Council's support in principle, the Freeport would become a reality, with the necessary site specific agreement templates in the report, a future memorandum of understanding, the Council's position on Business Rates Retention and finally the Full Business Case. The Leader welcomed the focus on becoming the greenest Freeport in the UK, with investment in sustainable development and having particular regard to investment, skills and training for the communities covered by the Freeport area.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure welcomed in particular 12.1 of the template, which confirmed that nothing would fetter or restrict the Council's statutory rights, powers, discretions and responsibilities, referring particularly to the planning process including the Council's Local Plan.

In response to questions on the necessary jobs and skills for an area in the New Forest with pockets of deprivation, the Leader of the Council confirmed this would remain the Council's focus and key priority and work with partners was already underway.

In response to concerns about the environmental implications of the Freeport and the need to strongly implement its existing planning policies and protect ecology and the National Park, the Leader of the Council and officers confirmed that the Local Plan was well tested through the inquiry process and it continued to be the Council's statutory function to defend the Local Plan.

A number of Members placed on record their support for the pledge to make the Solent Freeport the greenest Freeport in the UK.

**58 COMMUNITY GRANTS 2022/23****RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Community Grant awards, totalling £130,000 in revenue grants and £85,600 in capital grants, as set out in Appendix 1, and in more detail in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2022/23;
- (b) That Grant awards totalling £28,500 are made from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable funding held by the Council as part of the COVID-19 funding support received by the Government; and

- (c) That the proposed changes as set out in section 5.2 of the report be approved.

**REASONS FOR DECISION:**

As set out in the report.

**KEY DECISION:**

Yes.

**PORTFOLIO:**

People and Places.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:**

As set out in the report.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):**

The Leader of the Council, for transparency purposes declared that one of the recommended grants was for an organisation that fell inside his District ward.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted the rigorous and challenging process to get to a set of recommendations. He expressed his thanks to the Task and Finish Group for their work. The Leader of the Council and other Members extended their thanks to the Task and Finish Group and it was noted in particular the presence of culture and performing arts which remained important to many communities in the New Forest.

**59 ASSET MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet approve and recommend to Full Council that the schedule of projects, as included at Appendix 2 and 3 be approved within the 2022/23 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 drew attention to section 3 of the report which outlined the overall programme funds.

In response to questions on retrospective modifications and vehicle replacements, it was confirmed that the programme ensured an efficient replacement programme taking into account the future of the Council's Waste Strategy.

**60 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the Capital Strategy 2022/23 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 explained that it set out how the Council would finance its activities over the medium term. In 2022/23, the Council was planning capital expenditure of £49.704m.

CHAIRMAN