

17 JANUARY 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIPS AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday, 17 January 2023

* Cllr Keith Craze (Chairman)

* Cllr Neville Penman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Louise Cerasoli
* Steve Clarke
* Arthur Davis
Richard Frampton

Councillors:

* David Hawkins
* Alan O'Sullivan
* Caroline Rackham
* Alex Wade

*Present

In attendance:

Alison Talbot and Jeremy Ogden, CANF

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden

Councillors:

David Russell

Officers Attending:

Joanne McClay, Alan Bethune, Brian Byrne, Iain Park, Andy Rogers,
Manjit Sandhu, Ryan Stevens and Nikki Swift

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Frampton.

13 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2022 be confirmed and signed.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr A Wade declared a non - pecuniary interest in item 6 (Community Grants) as one of the applicants (the Handy Trust) was funded by Hythe and Dibden Parish Council, of which he was Chairman. He also declared a non - pecuniary interest in item 5, (Citizens Advice New Forest), as CANF used the Parish Council offices. Cllr Wade also declared a non -pecuniary interest in item 10 (Safer New Forest Partnership), as he was an employee of the Hampshire & IOW Fire and Rescue Service (a member of the Partnership).

Cllr S Clarke declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 (Cemeteries Provision), as Milford cemetery was within the New Milton Town Council area, of which he was a member.

Cllr A O'Sullivan declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 (Cemeteries Provision), as Milford cemetery was within the New Milton Town Council area, of which he was a member.

Cllr D Hawkins declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 (Cemeteries Provision), as Milford cemetery was within the New Milton Town Council area, of which he was a member.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

16 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted its Terms of Reference.

17 CITIZENS ADVICE NEW FOREST

The Panel received an update on the activities of Citizens Advice New Forest (CANF) from its former Chief Officer, Alison Talbot. The slides from the presentation are available with the agenda pack.

The presentation focussed on how CANF was supporting people across the New Forest through the cost of living crisis.

CANF provided advice on reducing food shopping bills and signposted people to food banks and similar organisations. CANF had also helped residents get help with their energy bills. Over 50% of CANF clients have a disability or long term health condition.

The Panel also noted details of activities and partnership working throughout the year, including with the Council, with accommodation changes, new staff, events, initiatives as well as a royal visit.

There had been a 19% increase in the number of clients between 2021/22 and 2022/23 often involving multiple issues and complex cases. Enquiries relating to food banks had risen by 123% and energy costs enquiries had risen by 165%, in the same period. Training of staff was key in building capacity.

The presentation highlighted the importance of project income in funding work with partners such as Macmillan, Kickstart, the Money and Pensions Service and the Trussell Trust.

The current funding agreement with NFDC was in place until 2025, though it was pointed out that funding had reduced by a third over recent years.

Members noted that Allison Talbot had recently left her role as Chief Officer of CANF, and wished to place on record their thanks for her contribution and help and support over the years, and emphasised how highly CANF's work was thought of.

18 COMMUNITY GRANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel received the report of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group together with its recommendations on Grant awards to community organisations.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Community Grant awards, totalling £129,600 in revenue grants and £92,000 in capital grants, as set out in Appendix 1, and in more detail in Appendix 2, be approved for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2023/24.
- b) That the proposed changes as set out in section 4.2 of the report be approved.
- c) That the Community Transport grants as set out in section 5.5 be approved.

19 CEMETERIES PROVISION

The Panel considered recommendations on proposals to expand cemeteries provision at Calshot and Milford Road cemeteries, to meet predicted future interment needs and deliver obligations across the New Forest District Council area.

The Panel wished to ensure that representations were made to HCC to ensure that any potential noise from gravel extraction works adjacent to Milford Road Cemetery, New Milton, did not disturb the peace and tranquillity of the cemetery. The Panel was assured by officers that due diligence and process would be followed to ensure concerns were taken into account in any response to planning applications and negotiations with the current site owners.

RESOLVED:

That it be a recommendation to Cabinet:

- i. That in order to meet predicted future interment needs, officers progress the expansion of interment provision at Calshot cemetery, and that the Cabinet agree a new budget of £60,000 to facilitate this expansion.
- ii. That in order to meet predicted future interment needs, officers continue discussions with the landowners of the adjacent and adjoining land identified at Milford Cemetery, with a subsequent project budget to be confirmed at a later date.
- iii. That a review be progressed of eight closed churchyards, and two additional nearing closure, to ensure the associated transferred liabilities and risks are in full compliance with legislation.

- iv. To progress options for cremated remains columbaria and identify the most appropriate locations in Council cemeteries, paying particular attention to Calshot and Milford Road.

20 COUNCIL MOTION - PETS AS PRIZES

The Panel considered the motion from Council as set out on the agenda, concerning the giving of pets as prizes.

Members noted that the giving of animals as prizes did not fall under the licensing regime and therefore it could not be controlled under animal welfare licensing.

However, members were advised that the Council could look at preventing this activity taking place on Council owned land in the future by requiring the Council's Estates and Open Spaces Service to include conditions precluding the giving of pets as prizes in agreements prior to giving consent to use of its land.

There were also significant areas of land across the Forest that was owned by town and parish Councils, which often held events, and the Council could write to them requesting that they take a similar approach, putting restrictions on any event organisers using their land.

Members were also advised that if the Panel wished, a letter could be sent on behalf of the Council to the Government urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.

The Panel supported the proposed measures outlined by officers in response to the motion.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Council be advised that the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel supports the motion and recommends that officers be asked to implement the following:

- (a) That the Council's Estates and Open Spaces Service be asked to include conditions precluding the giving of pets as prizes in agreements prior to giving consent to use of its land.
- (b) That a letter be sent to all Parish and Town Councils in the New Forest district, urging them to adopt the same approach in imposing conditions on use of their land precluding the giving of pets as prizes.
- (c) That a letter be sent on behalf of the Council to the Government urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.

21 HEALTH AND LEISURE CONTRACT AND DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE CONTRACT - UPDATE

The Panel received and noted an update on progress with the contracts for the Council's Health and Leisure centres and Dibden Golf Course.

Freedom were looking to conclude their capital programme works during this quarter, including improved reception facilities at Totton and Applemore, a refurbished fitness studio and upgraded changing rooms at Totton, as well as new soft play and cafe at Ringwood.

Fitness memberships had grown by 6.6% in July to December 2022. Total memberships were still down 6% on pre-pandemic levels. With cost of living pressures affecting many households, gym membership was still thought of as a luxury at this point in time.

Just under 4800 children were learning to swim in the Council's 5 swimming pools, which was growth on pre - pandemic levels.

The energy crisis was having a significant impact on Freedom, who were having to make very difficult business decisions to maintain financial sustainability. and some mitigation measures were in place, including reduced pool temperatures. It was reported that savings from pool temperature reductions outweighed the lost income from reduced customer use. Feedback from customers would continue to be monitored.

The GP referrals scheme had seen a 9% growth, with over 300 residents on the scheme. Freedom were also due to launch their Healthy Communities Action Plan during 2023, which would come through this Panel in due course.

MyTime were showing a strong performance, with pay and play golf participation levels increasing, up on pre pandemic levels. Food and beverage income had also recovered. Proposals were in place to reopen the Pro Shop, and the customer experience for the Driving Range was being reviewed with a view to making some improvements. Members were reminded of the 3 year contract variation agreed last year.

Members commented that they had received feedback on the temperature of the learning pool. Members felt that it was important for Freedom to engage with customer feedback, including from a reputational point of view. It was recognised that this was a nationwide issue, and the Council would be in a worse position had it not made the changes it had.

It was confirmed that pool temperatures were still 1.5 degrees warmer than the main pool, and within national guidelines. There had been a brief problem with the boiler at Applemore, which may have contributed to some feedback received.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

22 SAFER NEW FOREST PARTNERSHIP AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The Panel received an update on outcomes from actions in the current Safer New Forest Partnership Plan 2022/2023, and to receive an update on the Draft Safer New Forest Strategic Assessment, 2023.

Updates were given on outcomes from the current Plan for 2022/23.

The Partnership Plan included the following priorities with a named responsible Lead Partner:

- **Drug & alcohol related harm** – Hampshire Constabulary. Forum meets every 6 weeks and police data is reviewed and at-risk individuals identified. Acquisitive crimes were linked to this priority. Bike security initiatives were outlined.
- **Domestic abuse** – Community Safety, New Forest District Council. The Domestic abuse Forum meets quarterly and data is discussed to highlight gaps in service delivery and training needs. 2 related webinars had been arranged and well attended by a wide variety of delegates.
- **Prevention of risk and exploitation of vulnerable people** – Hampshire & IOW Fire & Rescue Service. The Service undertook 'Safe and Well' visits, where vulnerabilities could be identified and referrals made to the relevant agencies. Various fire safety campaigns and initiatives were also outlined.

On the Strategic Assessment, it was noted that crime trend data was analysed and tactical actions agreed among the partner agencies.

A summary of the trends in various crime categories was given and it was explained that drivers to these trends were identified. Not all of these data represented convictions and further analysis was being undertaken.

Overall, research had shown that 96% of those living in the Forest felt safe, or very safe when it came to fear of crime in the New Forest.

Members raised a number of queries on the following topics:

- **Coercive control** – this only became an offence recently. The Team were trying to raise awareness and develop a domestic abuse strategy.
- **Commercial burglaries** – A query was raised as to whether the Council could work with businesses to improve their premises' security measures. It was confirmed that the Council was actively working with businesses on this.
- **Vandalism** – On the recent uplift of graffiti – there had been some initiatives with groups and individuals and where it was council or public land, NFDC Street Scene were deployed to remove it within 24 hours, particularly if it was obscene graffiti.
- **Bike and Van thefts** – It was confirmed that prevention work was undertaken Partnership working? County lines. It was reported that there were a number of recovered bikes but the owners were not identified. Bike marking, a national scheme, was being undertaken. Secure storage units were a good preventative measure. Vehicle crime – the Council continued to work with local partners to disseminate preventative advice and guidance. The Council provided signage and proactive advice in some local car parks and other 'hotspots'.

23 HAMPSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Panel received an update from the Council's representative on the Hampshire Police and Crime Panel.

The Portfolio holder for Partnership and Wellbeing reported his attendance at the HPCP where the appointment of the new Chief Constable, Mr Scott Chilton had been confirmed.

The portfolio holder had raised topics including ASB, criminal damage and vandalism and was pleased with Mr Chilcott's response in terms of a robust response.

24 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORTS AND PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Panel received updates from Portfolio Holders on developments within their portfolios.

Cllr Blunden, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Wellbeing

The food safety team had been continuing to work hard to complete the backlog of food hygiene inspections following the pandemic and were fully on track with the Food Standards Agency recovery programme and aim to have completed all of the high and medium risk food inspections by the end of the financial year. Over 80% of food businesses in the New Forest currently have the top food hygiene score of 5, with the Team working with those few businesses with lower scores.

As business were recovering from the pandemic and diversifying, the licensing team was working on guidance for businesses to help them control noise and reduce likelihood of noise and complaints when holding events.

The Health and Wellbeing Plan was adopted by Council in October last year and officers are currently finalising the action plan. This plan highlights the actions we are delivering to meet our priorities of working in partnership to improve the physical activity and mental wellbeing of our residents and this will be shared at a future meeting.

Emergency response exercises has been recently undertaken with local agencies focussing on weather related events.

Cllr Russell, Portfolio holder for People and Places

It was reported that the number of people invited to the Council's Arts and Culture network workshop had been expanded, with over one hundred individuals now involved. Work with the Culture In Common initiative continued.

It was confirmed that the Queen's Canopy scheme would continue until the end of March 2023 with 500 trees being planted.

25 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted its work programme.

26 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the following dates be agreed for Panel meetings in the 2023/24 municipal year:

(All Tuesdays at 6pm)

13 June 2023
12 September 2023
16 January 2024
19 March 2024

27 ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

The Chairman informed the Panel that this was Manjit Sandhu's last Panel meeting, as she would be leaving her current role as Executive Head of Partnerships and Operations, on 31 January 2023. Manjit had been with the Council for 25 years, and on behalf of the Panel, the Chairman wished to place on record members' sincere thanks for her long, dedicated service, help and advice.

CHAIRMAN