

6 JULY 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 6 July 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:

Alan Alvey
Sue Bennison
Keith Craze
Jack Davies
Philip Dowd
Barry Dunning
Allan Glass
David Hawkins

Councillors:

Mahmoud Kangarani
Caroline Rackham
Joe Reilly
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Neil Tungate
Malcolm Wade
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Tim Davis, Paul Downton, Richard Knott, Rebecca Murphy, Chris Noble, Grainne O'Rourke, Sheryl Parry, Nicola Plummer, Manjit Sandhu, Ryan Stevens, Claire Upton-Brown, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received from Cabinet Members.

9 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2022, be confirmed and signed.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members of the Cabinet under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them to speak and to vote on the Scheme of Members' Allowances, at minute 20 below.

The Leader declared, for transparency purposes, his responsibility as Hampshire County Council Portfolio Holder for Transport and Environment Strategy. Hampshire County Council is the Waste Disposal Authority in respect of the District Council's responsibilities for waste collection. The Waste Strategy was considered at minute 12 below.

11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following members of the public had registered to speak in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme:-

- Mr Ralph Kent
- Mr Tony Watts

Both members of the public spoke in respect of the Waste Strategy, at minute 12 below.

12 WASTE STRATEGY 2022-2027

RESOLVED:

1. That the Cabinet, having considered the recommendations of the Environment and Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Panel, approves and recommends to Council the adoption of the Waste Strategy 2022-2027. The adoption of the Strategy includes changes to frontline services and one-off transition costs as follows:
 - a. the introduction of a weekly food waste collection service
 - b. the adoption of a two-weekly, "twin stream" recycling service to enable residents to recycle a greater range and quantity of recyclable materials (collected on the opposite week to general waste)
 - c. the introduction of a two-weekly collection of general waste (collected on the opposite week to recycling)
 - d. the use of wheeled bins for general waste and mixed recycling, with paper and card collected in a reusable bag
 - e. the use of wheeled bins for garden waste collections (collections remain two-weekly)
 - f. transition funding of £1.1m is required to mobilise the roll-out of the new strategy, including delivery of new bins, temporary staff, communications and education. Beyond the transition period, communications and education will continue to have a vital role in reducing waste and increasing recycling.
2. That authority is delegated to the Executive Heads in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services to take all operational decisions to implement the above recommendations and all aspects of the Strategy.
3. That the progression of the strategy is on the understanding that new burdens funding will cover the increased costs associated with food waste collection.

4. That the council continue to monitor progress at national and regional level to ensure that Strategy implementation is compliant and delivered in the most financially efficient manner.
5. That allowance is made within the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning to accommodate a variety of funding scenarios until clarity on new burdens and new income is provided.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Environment and Coastal Services.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

The Leader of the Council, for transparency purposes, declared his responsibility as Hampshire County Council Portfolio Holder for Transport and Environment Strategy. Hampshire County Council was noted as the Waste Disposal Authority.

DISCUSSION:

The Cabinet heard from two members of the public, speaking against the recommendations in the report, in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme.

Mr Ralph Kent cited concerns on the Waste Strategy in the following four themes, and further questioned the Council in respect of these areas, having recently attended the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel:-

- Consultation – in respect of the alternative options that might be available to wheeled bins.
- Environmental – in respect of the opportunity to implement food waste collections outside of the wider Waste Strategy aims, and the importance of ensuring recycling was measurable and accountable in the UK rather than being sent overseas.
- Procurement – assurances for an open, transparent process.
- Accountability – for the meeting of targets set within the strategy.

Mr Tony Watts raised his personal, family and friends' concerns with regard to the visual and practical implications of wheeled bins, including an increased risk of fly tipping associated also with a fortnightly residual waste collection. He suggested that plastic sacks could in future be recyclable. He thanked local refuse collectors for their tireless work in the community.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and thanked the members of the Sustainable Waste Task and Finish Group for their significant work over a number of years to develop the strategy, respond to Government consultations and engage with industry experts and Council officers to bring forward the final Waste Strategy. He highlighted the importance of improving recycling rates in the New Forest, alongside the embracing of initiatives with positive climate change and nature implications including alternate weekly collections and the removal of single use plastic bags. Moving forward, the education and communication plan for reducing waste and increasing recycling within communities would be a key area of focus for the Council.

Council officers responded in detail to the technical questions raised by the public participants. It was noted that the District Council would be operating in accordance with the direction of the Government's requirements and the necessary partnership working across Hampshire Collection Authorities and with Hampshire County Council as the Disposal Authority.

Members sought assurances on the survey work to identify household suitability for wheeled bins. It was confirmed that a detailed plan would come forward, informed by a survey in the coming months. Assisted collections would also form part of this.

It was noted that the option to bring forward food waste collection ahead of the strategy had been rejected for a number of reasons, including associated Government funding and the likely effectiveness of the service which was proven to maximise results when combined with other service changes such as the alternate weekly collection.

The Council's target for recycling within the strategy was discussed and challenged. It was noted that the target would develop over time.

The Leader and the Portfolio Holder summarised and thanked all Members and public participants for their interest and contribution.

13 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2021/22

RESOLVED:

1. That the Annual Performance Report for 2021/22 be noted;
2. That the provisional outturn of the General Fund revenue and capital budgets for 2021/22 be noted; and
3. That the provisional outturn of the Housing Revenue Account for 2021/22 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 introduced the report and placed on record his thanks to Members and Officers for their tireless work in a very challenging year, as the Council recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to a question on budget underspend within the outturn, the S151 Officer highlighted the regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet which routinely identified underspends. Whilst the final total underspend was higher than in previous years, the last year had been exceptionally different for Councils across the country and the underspend would assist the Council with upcoming challenges as the cost of living and utility pressures continued.

It was confirmed that the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy would come forward shortly for consideration.

14 RESIDENT INSIGHT 2022

RESOLVED:

1. In order to gather resident and community insight, that a representative survey of the district's residents be undertaken in line with national best practice.
2. That the survey will be undertaken between 1 September and 31 October 2022 and will enable the Council to understand and respond to changing resident needs, make improvements to services and baseline current performance.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and welcomed what was considered a very valuable exercise as the Council sought to understand residents' needs and priorities in a changing world.

The rationale for conducting a telephone survey was clarified, which ensured representative data in respect of the New Forest population, from across the District's wards and within different demographics, such as gender, age and work status.

15 DIGITAL STRATEGY - CUSTOMER FIRST, DIGITAL BY DESIGN

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the Digital Strategy.

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 highlighted the importance of a people focused strategy, putting the needs of customers and residents first, whilst pursuing digital services where appropriate and in support of service efficiencies. Within the strategy, maintaining telephone and face-to-face options for residents remained an integral part of services for those that need it.

Further to questions, the Leader clarified that the Council Chamber AV system was due for replacement to ensure high quality broadcasts for the public watching

Council meetings. Every project that came forward within Council's Digital Strategy would be supported by a business case and many would have a pay back and efficiencies attached to them. However, some, such as the Council Chamber AV, related to essential system upgrades, that were priorities for the Council without any specific pay back proposals.

Members welcomed the commitment to ensure access to services remained available to all, including those customers and residents that did not prefer digital methods.

16 SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES, HOUSEHOLDS AND THE COMMUNITY

RESOLVED:

That the Council continues to work with partners to identify emerging issues and explore further funding options and initiatives to support communities and the most vulnerable residents across the district.

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 highlighted the scale of support and grants provided to the community throughout 2021/22. He placed on record his thanks to the team who had administered the support at pace, performing exceptionally well to ensure funds were out into communities very quickly.

In response to queries on the publicity and awareness of hardship funds, officers highlighted the examples of publicising with partners, on all of the Council's communication channels and directly with claimants.

The Leader concluded by encouraging Members to ensure that any residents that were struggling financially or needed signposting and support, were made aware of the support available from Citizens Advice New Forest, and the Council's Revenue and Benefits service.

17 DEPRIVATION WITHIN THE NEW FOREST

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council that:-

1. the scale of the national and local support measures in place to assist households that are most in need within the District, be noted;
2. the existing cross-cutting work on-going within the Council and with partners to support those most in need, including those within the most deprived neighbourhoods in the District, continues;
3. continued support to the Cost of Living Steering Group is provided, bringing a multi-agency approach to tackling issues affecting the most vulnerable in the community, working alongside the Local Partnership Campaign Manager to explore and promote further support to households.
4. That an annual report on deprivation be considered by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader / All.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

Cllr J Davies, the proposer of the original motion, addressed the Cabinet and expressed his disappointment that the recommendations did not adopt the proposals within the original motion.

The Leader highlighted the importance of a transparent report on the deprivation in the District's area and the proportionate response within available resources. He highlighted the Council's long track record of tackling deprivation through partnership working and the golden strand within the Corporate Plan of economic welfare for the people of the New Forest. It was suggested that an annual report on deprivation could be brought to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

18 NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Development Plan (Appendix 1 of the report), be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

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 welcomed how it framed the Council's objectives for housing development with clarity and purpose. The comprehensive document guided the day to day activity and approach in this area and the delivery of the team to date was welcomed.

The Leader welcomed the report and echoed the comments of thanks to the Housing Development team for continuing to overcome the difficult challenges of delivery.

19 GREENER HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-2032

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council that:-

1. The proposed Greener Housing Strategy be approved; and
2. The potential financial implications of delivering the strategy to meet Government targets, be noted, to ensure it complements the corporate work that is ongoing to deliver the Council's Climate and Nature Change Action Plans, following the declaration of a Climate Change and Nature emergency in October 2021.

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 thanked the work of the Greener Housing Task and Finish Group for their extensive work over the last 18 months. It had been an interesting journey with learning for all. The retrofitting of properties and working with communities to encourage greener initiatives was welcomed by a number of Members. The Council would seek to maximise funding and it was expected that Housing Authorities across the country would be looking to the Government to assist in this area.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services welcomed the report and in particular sought to work with colleagues to support delivery within the community on greener housing initiatives.

A number of Members spoke further in support of the strategy.

20 SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, for the Scheme of Members' Allowances to apply from 1 April 2022.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

N/A.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

The Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members of the Cabinet under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to enable them to speak and to vote on this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and proposed that, as had been the practice of the Council for many years, that the recommendations of the Independent Panel, be adopted in respect of Members' Allowances. Cllr Cleary seconded the proposal.

CHAIRMAN