

7 SEPTEMBER 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 7 September 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

Sue Bennison

Steve Clarke

Philip Dowd

David Hawkins

Councillors:

Alison Hoare

Joe Reilly

Steve Rippon-Swaine

Malcolm Wade

Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, James Clarke, Chris Noble, Grainne O'Rourke, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Andrews.

An apology for absence was also received from Cllr Glass due to ill health. The Cabinet sent their best wishes to Cllr Glass for a speedy recovery.

27 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cost of living

The Leader highlighted the significant impact of inflation and rising energy costs, not only on those most in need but to all levels of incomes and businesses across the New Forest. A further update would be provided at the next Council meeting as the Council started to receive more information from the Government on national support. The Council continued to actively work on its Warmer Homes campaign.

Eligible residents were encouraged to ensure they received their Energy Council Tax rebate as soon as possible. However, any unclaimed amounts would be credited to residents' Council tax accounts and therefore would not be lost if not claimed. The Council's website had lots of practical information for residents on support available directly from the Council and from partners.

Resident Insight 2022

The Council would soon be commencing its telephone survey with residents over the coming weeks. 750 people across the District would be contacted from a range of demographics.

It was hoped that this would add to the Council's knowledge on priorities for the future as the Council tackled its own challenges with the rising cost of energy and inflationary pressures.

28 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2022, be confirmed and signed.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

30 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

31 VEHICLE AND PLANT REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2022/23 – 2023/24

RESOLVED:

1. That the Cabinet recommend that Council approve a 2023/24 Vehicles and Plant Replacement budget of £2.400 million, to accommodate the purchases originally intended to be made in 2022/23, whilst noting the revenue implications to be picked up within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
2. That the Cabinet note the intention to present the broader replacement programme 2023/24 as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Environment and Coastal Services / 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 commended the recommendations.

The Service Manager, Waste and Transport, highlighted the challenges faced by the service in undertaking the replacement programme. Detailed in full in the report, supply chain issues, inflation and global pressures were all contributing to the complexity of delivering the programme. The table at 4.2 of the report detailed the current lead in times, which were significantly lengthened since 2019. The Council's commitment to contributing positively to tackle the Climate and Nature Emergency was highlighted, particularly in exploring alternative fuel options.

In response to one Member's question on the cost of keeping older vehicles on the road, it was noted that there was an existing vehicle maintenance budget. However, the economic life of Council vehicles and plant were continually reviewed to ensure the appropriate condition and reliability.

32 UPDATED RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet recommend to Council the adoption of the Risk Management Policy and the updated Strategic Risk Register.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and highlighted the importance of considering all strategic risks. Whilst eliminating all risks was not possible, the process of considering risk allowed the Council to understand and mitigate to a proportionate, efficient and sensible level.

The Insurance and Risk Officer reported that the Strategic Risk Register and Risk Management Policy were important parts of the overall governance of the Council. Risk management was a continuous process, allowing the Council to identify, understand and introduce appropriate mitigations.

A number of Members welcomed the new framework, as strong, dynamic and responsive in its approach. It was noted that with the recommendation to Full Council, there was a responsibility for all Members to be aware of its position in the organisation. With regard to the operational risk registers that sat below the strategic register, it was confirmed that these were held at both portfolio and service level and were regularly updated.

33 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022 ONWARDS

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommend to Council:-

- (a) That the revised MTFP forecasts, as outlined within the report and appendices be adopted;
- (b) That the options identified to close the budget gap for 2023/24 and through to 2026/27 are developed further;
- (c) That the Fees and Charges Policy set out in section 4e of the report be adopted; and
- (d) That the reporting timeline as set out in section 6 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 / Housing and Homelessness 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 challenges in the current climate, with rising inflation and increased costs creating a deficit. The

challenge to the Council moving forward would be to meet this gap in-year and over the medium term.

The Chief Finance Officer highlighted in particular the effect of the pay award on rising costs to the Council. In addition to the Council's excellent track record in managing its finances, the Transformation Programme over the medium to long term would provide the Council with new opportunities to modernise and protect service delivery, whilst delivering savings. This would be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.

One Member highlighted the Business Rate Reset and the uncertainty of its timing. He suggested if this did not come forward, the funds could be diverted to assist residents during the cost of living crisis. The Leader highlighted the importance of maintaining appropriate levels of reserves, particularly with the example of the pay award offer which came at a significant cost to the Council. Without this planning, many councils would not be in a position to respond to these examples of unexpected cost rises. However, a comprehensive approach to supporting residents would always be pursued, noting that maintaining the delivery of services by managing the Council's finances effectively was one of the best ways of supporting residents.

The Chief Finance Officer provided a brief update on the Business Rates Reset, which was pushed back to 2025/26 in the Council's financial planning. It was reported that this still appeared to be a reasonable assumption and therefore it continued to be right for the Council to plan for it and to address the consequential funding gap.

34 MEETING DATES

RESOLVED:

1. That the following dates of meetings for 2023/24 (Wednesdays at 10.00am), be agreed:-
 - 3 May 2023 (already agreed)
 - 7 June 2023
 - 5 July 2023
 - 2 August 2023
 - 6 September 2023
 - 4 October 2023
 - 1 November 2023
 - 6 December 2024
 - 7 February 2024
 - 21 February 2024
 - 6 March 2024
 - 3 April 2024
 - 1 May 2024

2. That the following additional meeting date in 2022/23 (Wednesday at 10.00am), be agreed:-
 - 15 February 2023

CHAIRMAN