

5 OCTOBER 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 5 October 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
Ann Bellows
Sue Bennison
Philip Dowd
Barry Dunning

Councillors:

Allan Glass
David Hawkins
Christine Hopkins
Joe Reilly
Malcolm Wade

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Jamie Burton, Rebecca Drummond, Kevin Green, Sheryl Parry,
Jon Randall, Manjit Sandhu, Joe Tyler and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr S Davies.

35 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

HM The Queen Elizabeth II

The Leader referred to the sad death of HM The Queen, and highlighted the role the Council played to support communities to reflect and mourn. Moving forward, the extension of the Green Canopy tree planting initiative would be a lasting and fitting tribute to The Queen, with the Council taking forward 60 trees in 30 locations in The Queen's name in the upcoming planting period.

Rural Prosperity Fund

The Leader was pleased to confirm that the Council had been awarded £540,000 as part of the Government's Rural Prosperity Fund, enabling the Council to support rural businesses and communities across the District over the next two years. The fund added to the Council's overall share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

36 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2022, be confirmed and signed.

37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

38 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

39 HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommend to Council that the Health and Wellbeing Plan is adopted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Partnering and Wellbeing.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and placed on record his thanks to the Task and Finish Group and officers for their detailed work to draft and bring forward the plan. The collation and formulation of data with varied partners had been a challenging and worthwhile process. The plan built on the good work already undertaken and provided a tool to focus on areas of need and priorities.

The Health and Partnerships Manager highlighted the national studies that informed the plan. The data collected had focused attention on stubborn health inequalities that allowed the Council, with partners, to shape an approach to meeting national, regional and local targets.

In response to questions on ensuring the plan delivered a vision for what the Council wanted to achieve, officers highlighted that actions did not all sit with New Forest District Council. The partnership approach, aided by a live document would ensure areas of focus. It was noted that priority one of the plan included the establishment of a Healthier New Forest Partnership, which would produce an action plan to target priorities.

The Portfolio Holder summarised by highlighting the strong track record of the Council and partners over many years in this area, and commended the plan.

40 YEAR ONE SUMMARY OF THE FREEDOM LEISURE CONTRACT

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet note the transition year summary position and the financial implications of both the transition year and the Net Income Adjustment built into the service contract with Freedom Leisure (to take effect in the second year of the contract).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Partnering and Wellbeing.

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 impact of rising utility costs on all leisure providers, which was creating a significant challenge for the sector. Intervention from Government was welcome but the Council and partners, including Freedom Leisure, would continue to lobby for further support. The Leader of the Council committed to writing to Government on this issue.

A number of mitigating actions had been taken by Freedom Leisure to address the challenges, particularly in achieving sustainability in the running of swimming pools.

The Leisure Contract Monitoring Officer highlighted the regular reports to the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel throughout the first year of the partnership, which would continue into the future. Freedom

Leisure had over 100 sites across the UK and were working collectively on mitigation actions, including with Community Leisure UK and UK Active.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services referred to the financial implications in the report and noted the post-covid impact on numbers attending leisure centres. He highlighted the significant financial burden that would have been solely with the Council, had it not entered into the partnership. One Member highlighted the extensive financial scrutiny undertaken throughout the development of the contract and the ongoing role of Overview and Scrutiny in contract monitoring.

In response to concerns on feedback to recent changes to pool temperatures, it was noted that this remained a fine balance between customer experience, cost and climate and nature issues. However, Freedom Leisure were committed to the national guidelines for pool temperatures. Wider investment was currently taking place in the venues at the moment, with new much improved café, soft play, gym and front end facilities.

41 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:-

- (a) support the development of a council-wide transformation programme to improve service outcomes and contribute budget savings as outlined in the Medium-term financial plan; and
- (b) note that a Business Case will be brought to the new administration in advance of commencement of the programme in Q1 2023/24.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Leader / All.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and referred to one of the District Council's strengths as financial sustainability. Whilst changing can be expensive

for any type of organisation, with good planning and tackling challenges early, the Council was well placed to invest early to meet future challenges, looking ahead to the cumulative deficit in the Medium Term Financial Plan. He welcomed the report.

The Service Manager – Elections and Business Improvement highlighted the drivers and opportunities for change in the report. The programme contained the standard phases typical of a transformation programme. Strong communications and engagement would be key to the success of the programme. The Council's senior leadership team had already contributed to the framework for the plan. The temporary dedicated resource required to ensure initial preparations could take place was noted. A full business case would come forward to the new administration following the District Council Elections in May 2023.

One Member expressed his concern about potential austerity measures that could come forward, and how the Council might progress the transformation programme effectively in this context. In addition, reassurances were sought that the Council's hardship fund would not be impacted by the programme. The Leader highlighted the positive investment from the Government, including the Freeport initiative and that the Council had always sought to redirect resources to priorities and find new ways of working and seek efficiencies, rather than make cuts to services. The Chief Executive confirmed that there would be no impact on the hardship fund as a result of the Transformation Programme. The Council would continue to work with partners to make the best use of discretionary payments, for the benefit of residents who were most in need of support.

A number of Members and officers reiterated that the programme would put the needs of residents at the heart of service delivery, and that whilst digital methods would be pursued for internal efficiencies and for those customers that wished to engage in a digital manner, contact with the Council would remain available in other ways for those who could not access services digitally.

CHAIRMAN