

1 MARCH 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

* Cllr Diane Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Geoffrey Blunden
* Steve Davies
* Michael Harris

Councillors:

* Edward Heron
* Jeremy Heron
* David Russell

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Steve Clarke
Keith Craze
Philip Dowd
David Hawkins
Christine Hopkins

Councillors:

Alan O'Sullivan
Caroline Rackham
Joe Reilly
Malcolm Wade
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, James Clarke, Sally Igra, Grainne O'Rourke,
Claire Upton-Brown, Karen Wardle and Mark Williams

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Cleary. As a result of this, Cllr Andrews, Deputy Leader of the Council took the Chair.

84 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the Leader's absence, the Deputy Leader reported that the work to address the Climate Change and Nature Emergency was gaining momentum, as demonstrated in the annual report discussed by Members in February. The Council was working to shape the strong ambitions into a refined strategy and action plan, to be published later in the year, the support for which is demonstrated by the continued funding in this year's budget agreed on 27 February.

Members of the District, Town and Parish Councils will be meeting to hear about what the Climate Change and Nature Emergency that the Council declared in 2021 means for local residents, businesses and visitors. Officers and speakers from partner organisations will outline what action is being taken to address the emergency and what Councillors and their communities can do to get involved. There will be more engagement going forwards as it is by working together that all partners can safeguard the New Forest from the impacts of climate change and habitat loss, now and for future generations.

85 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 be confirmed and signed.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

87 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

88 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER UPDATE

RESOLVED:

That the Strategic Risk Register, be reviewed and noted as part of the 6 monthly review process.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Leader's

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

In the Leader's absence, Cllr Edward Heron, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services introduced the report. This was a six month review following the approval of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) in September 2022. He reported that the 7 Strategic Risks previously identified remained unchanged but that the SRR had been updated with the details of the actions carried out over the last six months. It was important that the Council continue to identify and mitigate against the strategic risks.

The Insurance and Risk Officer highlighted that it was not feasible for the Council to eliminate all risks through risk management but to comprehend and to mitigate

against them to an acceptable level. The strategic cross cutting risks identified in the Strategic Risk Register demonstrate the strides the Council had taken to in this regard acknowledging that some risks could not be reduced to a green level.

The Executive Management Team and the Audit Committee would continue to monitor and review the risks and Cabinet would receive regular updates. The Strategic Risk Register would continue exist as a separate document and the next update would assess the updates and reset the actions as required.

A Member of the Council whilst supporting the updated SRR, highlighted a concern about the second Strategic Risk, risk control J regarding working with Towns and Parishes to maximise opportunities for joint working. He felt there should be a specific action to ensure there was a mechanism for achieving this, particularly with changes in personnel. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services acknowledged that officers could consider this for the future version of the Register, however, it was recognised that collective active working was carried out with organisations such as the New Forest Association of Local Councils.

89 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the report be noted and that the proposed mechanism for the allocation of the Business Support element of the Rural England Prosperity Fund be agreed.
2. That it be agreed that an Investment Plan be prepared for Cabinet approval to allocate the Community Infrastructure Improvements.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Business, High Streets and Tourism

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and welcomed the Rural Fund of in excess of £500,000 DEFRA funding to be allocated in the District. Following the

launch of the scheme, the Council's Economic Development Team would invite and encourage local businesses to apply for a capital grant.

The Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economy reported that local authorities were expected to be in receipt of the fund in the next financial year. The fund was split between business grants and supporting community infrastructure. The report highlighted there was currently insufficient evidence in relation to priorities for supporting community infrastructure, however work would be carried out with Towns and Parishes to identify opportunities which meet the criteria and could be included in an Improvement Plan.

The Deputy Team Leader for Economic Development further highlighted that 60% of the Fund would be towards business grants. This equated to £324,000 over two years. Businesses could apply for a grant between £5,000-£15,000 for small scale capital grants, for example, equipment and machinery to boost productivity and for project innovation, as well as towards net zero infrastructure and projects to diversify farm businesses away from agriculture. The application process was being developed.

A Cabinet Member spoke in support of the fund, recognising it would support rural businesses and that this would have a positive impact on the local economy.

Members of the Council also spoke in support of the Rural Fund and asked questions in relation to the conversion of agricultural buildings and contribution towards net carbon zero and nature recovery. In response, it was recognised that business grants would have no impact on the planning process. The grants would need to be spent within a short period of time and therefore if there was a need to obtain planning permission there might not be enough time to deliver the project. It was confirmed that net carbon zero and nature recovery would form part of the assessment criteria in the grant process and also be considered through the community infrastructure projects.

A member felt there should be greater clarity regarding the definition of a rural business, however it was anticipated that this would be clarified when DEFRA released the guidance on the scheme.

90 THE LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL - REFORM TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the report be considered the suggested approach to the Council's response be approved: and
2. That authority be Delegated to the Executive Head of Planning Regeneration and Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure to make minor amendments to the response.

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:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which followed the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework. A number of the proposed changes would be significant for the District by further protecting and enhancing the environment. The Portfolio Holder welcomed the clarification that Local Planning Authorities might not be compelled to review green belt land for development. The Appendix to the report contained the consultation questions and the proposed responses.

The Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economy reported that there were 3 elements to the consultation. There were changes to the NPPF, the first were proposed to be introduced in Spring and these related to the constraints around meeting housing need and the Housing Delivery Test. It was recognised that the District Council did not currently have a 5 year housing land supply and therefore the proposals were positive. It was reported that the national target housing target would remain and would not be reviewed until 2024.

Members spoke in support of the consultation and the proposed District Council's response. It was particularly welcomed that the existing Neighbourhood Plans would be protected. Members recognised that the character of the District was different to other areas, with 80% of the area being within the National Park. This therefore increases pressure on the areas outside of the National Park and on green belt land, particularly as there were few brownfield sites available for development. A member welcomed the comments about wind generation and felt that a pragmatic approach needed to be taken.

91 TOTTON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**RESOLVED:**

1. That the content of the report be considered and that Cabinet support progressing delivery of the projects that have been identified in the report as 'quick wins';
2. That Cabinet support in principle the 6 Design Principles which set the Vision for Totton and agree that further consultation takes place to seek views from key stakeholders such as the Town Council, County Council and Neighbourhood Plan Team; and
3. That more detailed technical work as set out in the report be supported to progress a Regeneration Plan for Totton which will also inform future Local Plan work

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:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which set out the findings following a Community Engagement exercise carried out in 2022. Seven themes had emerged. A number of quick wins had been identified along with some further work which was welcomed.

The Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economy reported that the engagement exercise had identified differing views in relation to the impact of the car on the town centre. 6 design principles had been developed and these would be consulted upon with key stakeholders.

A Cabinet Member spoke in support of the work carried out so far and the proposed future work in order to improve Totton. It was recognised that Totton was the first of the town centres and villages to be reviewed and that other towns and parishes would follow.

Other members spoke in support of the report and welcomed the proposals. Concern was raised in relation a comment within the report about the barrier of moving around the town and that this barrier was more psychological, rather than physical. It was also felt there was an omission in quick wins regarding the look of Totton, through for example improvements to street furniture, railings, etc. An officer response was provided and members noted that discussions were being held regarding public realm improvements and transport matters, however, these did not specifically form part of the report to Cabinet as they had not been raised through the engagement exercise.

A member questioned the reference made in the report to a vision for Totton and the Waterside. He felt that the Waterside had its own communities which were separate to that of Totton. Totton was an urban centre in its own right, and therefore reference to the Waterside should be removed. A Cabinet member responded and acknowledged that whilst there are separate communities, Totton has economic links to other areas east of the forest and therefore felt that the link to the Waterside as outlined in the previously agreed vision document should remain.

92 DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Cabinet agree that the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) "Planning for Climate Change" be published for a six-week public consultation in May 2023; and
2. That any final editorial changes to the draft document (attached in Appendix 1 to the report) prior to publication 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:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder reported that the draft Supplementary Planning Document: Planning for Climate Change had an important role in supporting the climate change policies adopted in the Local Plan and in the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan. The SPD clarifies to developers how to achieve sustainable development, taking into account best practise and the standards to target and adopt. The Portfolio Holder thanked the officers involved in the SPD, which was clear and easy to read and understand. She encouraged all interested in the SPD to respond to the consultation.

The Local Plan lead officer reported that the SPD was to make the best use of the current Local Plan. The bar set in the SPD had been set high to encourage developers to achieve zero carbon in development in terms of energy efficiency and how buildings perform. Whilst this was high, if zero carbon could not be achieved, it was important to get as close to it as possible.

Members commended the report and draft SPD, recognising the importance of climate change on the Council's agenda and the need for sustainable development.

It was questioned by one member whether the SPD should make reference as part of sustainable development to also include nature initiatives.

CHAIRMAN