

21 MARCH 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 21 March 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
Fran Carpenter
Jack Davies
Barry Dunning

Councillors:

Alison Hoare
Alan O'Sullivan
Joe Reilly
Malcolm Wade

Officers Attending:

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

Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr S Davies.

68 UKRAINE

The Leader referred to the war in Ukraine at what was the first Cabinet meeting since the invasion. He placed on record the Cabinet's solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The Council had been flying the Ukraine flag at Appletree Court for a number of weeks.

Working with partners, the Council would assist refugees wherever possible, and seek to put in place practical support. A number of community groups had already made significant progress in supporting the efforts.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

The Leader of the Council declared, for transparency purposes, his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd. He confirmed that he would not take part in the debate or vote in item 3 – Solent Freeport, considered at minute 71 below.

70 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised during the public participation period.

71 SOLENT FREEPORT

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend to Council that:-

1. continued support is given to the Solent Freeport, noting the benefits and opportunities within the New Forest.
2. delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council's S151 Officer and the Deputy Leader of the Council, to endorse the Full Business Case, on behalf of the Council.
3. delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council's S151 Officer and the Deputy Leader of the Council, to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding, on behalf of the Council.
4. the Solent Freeport Business Rate Relief Policy is approved, with authority being given to the Council's Service Manager – Revenue and Benefits to make changes to the policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Service, to ensure it meets the criteria set by the Council and, in line with updated Government guidance.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

As set out in the report.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Full Council.

PORTFOLIO:

All.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST(S):

The Leader of the Council declared, for transparency purposes, his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd. He did not take part in the debate or vote.

DISCUSSION:

The Council's Section 151 Officer introduced the report and highlighted the three main aspects of the recommendations.

Firstly, to endorse the content of the Full Business Case which had been developed from the Outline Business Case.

Secondly, the Memorandum of Understanding, which set out how Rating Authorities would manage the growth and uplift in Business Rates generated by the designated tax sites within the Solent Freeport to achieve the aims and objectives of the Freeport.

Thirdly, the Business Rate Relief Policy designed by the Council, which outlined the eligibility criteria that businesses who occupied new hereditaments within the Tax Sites would need to adhere to in order to be awarded business rate relief.

The high levels of engagement with Council officers in the process was welcomed and there was confidence that a wide range of observations had been fed into the final documents.

In response to questions on the level of employment on the Waterside and across the District as a whole, it was confirmed that these would be supplied to Members outside of the meeting. With regard to infrastructure, around specific developments, it was highlighted that any infrastructure necessitated by a development, would be a requirement of any planning permission.

Members were informed of the Local Investment Priorities Fund, which would allow the Council to decide how an allocated proportion of funds were spent across the wider District area, in the context of the Freeport objectives.

The process for the accumulation of business rates was explained, with the opportunity to secure a proportion of funds without the risk of reset. The Investment Committee, to which the Leader of the Council was appointed, would determine the allocations.

One Member highlighted the importance of priority spending on the areas most affected by the Freeport. It was noted that the core investment fund did encourage the delivery of investment in and around the tax sites.

Members were reminded that a briefing would take place ahead of the Full Council meeting which provided an opportunity to ask any technical questions.

Note – Cllr E Heron requested that his abstention from the resolution above, be recorded.

CHAIRMAN