

**1 NOVEMBER 2023**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

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

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)  
Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

\* Geoffrey Blunden  
\* Jeremy Heron

**Councillors:**

\* Dan Poole  
\* Derek Tipp

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Steve Clarke  
Barry Dunning  
Allan Glass  
Joe Reilly  
Steve Rippon-Swaine

**Councillors:**

Neil Tungate  
Malcolm Wade  
Philip Dowd  
Alan Alvey

**Also In Attendance:**

**Officers Attending:**

Joe Tyler, Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Richard Knott and Sophie Tuffin.

**Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr S Davies.

**35 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 be confirmed and signed.

**36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**38 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (BASED ON PERFORMANCE APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2023 INCLUSIVE)****RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet:

- i) notes the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund (section 5), Capital (section 6), and HRA (section 7).
- ii) approves an increase in the Housing Revenue Account reactive maintenance budget of £200,000 and notes a reduction in the Dwelling Rents income budget of £100,000, with offsetting adjustments to act as a budget virement from a reduction of £100,000 in the Cyclical maintenance budget, a reduction of £120,000 in the Supervision and Management Maintenance Administration budget and a reduction of £80,000 in the Major Repairs capital budget.
- iii) approves an increase of £100,000 in the Housing Revenue Account Disabled Facilities Grant capital budget, with an offsetting reduction to the Major Repairs capital budget.

**KEY DECISION:**

Yes

**PORTFOLIO:**

Finance & Corporate / All

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:**

As set out in report.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

None

**DISCUSSION:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Corporate reported that the General Fund remained broadly on target with a few variations included within the report, and worthy of note were pressures relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget as picked up in the recommendations. Although the Portfolio Holder was disappointed that the Council was not forecast to fully deliver its Community Safety project at this stage he confirmed consultations had commenced with Town and Parish Councils and that the project is moving forward with delivery to commence in 2024. He stressed that it was important, when there is expenditure of this level, to ensure that value for money is attained and that the project is delivered properly in order to benefit the District's residents.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources, S151 and Transformation provided a summary of the report and explained that this was the second Financial Monitoring update of the year, this time covering April to September 2023 inclusive.

Cabinet was informed that the 2023/2024 Pay Award had not yet been settled. The current offer, following the result of the unions' balloting process, would likely see additional budget requirements. These expected costs had now been largely covered by way of cumulative budget savings as included within this report.

The Strategic Director Corporate Resources S151 and Transformation commented that it overly optimistic that the Community Safety project could be delivered within 12 months of the budget being set, hence the need for rephrasing into 2024/25 and possibly beyond. Increasing car park costs to the Council, by way of income collection and rent expenditure, would be offset by the 2024 revised car parking tariffs.

Homelessness pressures had increased across the District. It was explained that the Council had anticipated this and had made provision within the annual budget. Cabinet was pleased to note that the Government had awarded £302,000 in grant funding to the Council, meaning the additional cost to the Council had reduced from £1million to approximately £700,000.

There had been an increase in the number of void homes which the Strategic Director explained inevitably comes with an increased cost. Housing officers had reviewed other expenditure areas in order to mitigate the financial impact it would have on the Council's Housing Revenue Account overall.

A non-executive member raised concern over the increase in car parking charges and tariffs and how this was being used to mitigate increased costs faced by the Council. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Corporate explained that the increase to car parking charges had been carefully considered and were necessary to keep up with increased costs of running services.

**39 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY (2023 REFRESH)**

**RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet recommend to Council that the Procurement Strategy (2023 Refresh) set out in attachment Appendix 1, be adopted.

**KEY DECISION:**

No

**PORTFOLIO:**

Finance & Corporate

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:**

As set out in report.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

None

**DISCUSSION:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Corporate reported that the paper dealt with a standard Council process and, as a refresh of the 2018 Procurement Strategy, would enable the Council to continue meeting the standards expected when undertaking the procurement of third parties.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources, S151 and Transformation explained that the Procurement Strategy 2023 was largely the same format and content as the 2018 version, however updates had been made on the guiding principles. These guiding principles were: Value, Compliance, Environment and Fairness. Each principle had a set of improvement goals and an action plan in order to help monitor the progress and achieve the desired aims.

A non-executive member asked whether the Council would be reviewing all other legal processes and procedures involving third parties to see how improvements could be made. Reference was made to leisure centres and the Portfolio Holder expressed that the contract in question had saved the Council a considerable amount of money whilst retaining leisure services.

The Portfolio Holder answered a further question on how the strategy would achieve wider value for money, and not just the lowest cost. He explained that the cheapest option was not always the best value for money as it could cause further expense in the near future. Therefore, the Cabinet would always assess tenders with a wider view than basic cost.

CHAIRMAN