

3 APRIL 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 3 April 2024

* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Geoffrey Blunden
* Jeremy Heron

Councillors:

* Dan Poole
* Derek Tipp

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Alan Alvey
Peter Armstrong
Steve Clarke
Keith Craze
Philip Dowd
Barry Dunning
Allan Glass

Councillors:

Alan O'Sullivan
Caroline Rackham
Joe Reilly
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Malcolm Wade
Christine Ward

Also In Attendance:

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Dean Brunton, James Carpenter, James Clarke, Tanya Coulter, Rebecca Drummond, Richard Knott, James Smith, Clive Tritton, Joe Tyler and Saqib Yasin

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received from any Cabinet members.

70 LEADERS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Digital Planning Support

The Leader was pleased to report that the District Council had successfully bid to receive £100,000 in funding from the Government to improve digital planning processes. The funds had been awarded to help deliver a modern and efficient 21st century planning system that would be data-driven, standards based, and powered by modern, customer focussed products and services – all in line with the Future New Forest transformation programme.

The funding would help to improve the tools used to digitally map data across the district, which would provide residents and businesses with the most up to date and relevant information when using key online planning services, including the location of planning applications, viewing the locations of Tree Preservation Orders, finding the location of listed buildings, and identifying conservation areas.

Apprenticeship and Skills Hub

Using UK Share Prosperity funding the District Council had partnered with Solent Business & Skills Solutions to launch the New Forest Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, which provides businesses in the district with free advice about apprenticeships and skills training.

Businesses could contact the hub for guidance about apprenticeship funding options, obtaining a levy transfer from an apprenticeship levy-paying employer, and hiring processes, as well as how to find suitable providers for training and skills development programmes. Further details were available on the Solent Business and Skills website.

71 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024, be confirmed and signed.

72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

73 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

74 UPDATED CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2028

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommended to Council the approval of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 in Appendix 1, updated following public consultation; and

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Council

PORTFOLIO:

Leaders / All

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader presented the Updated Corporate Plan for 2024-2028 and thanked all Officers and Councillors who were involved in its development.

The Performance and Insight Manager reported that, leading up to the consultation, the Corporate Plan had been informed by the administration's election manifesto, feedback from the residents' survey, elected members and staff engagement. Following consultation, feedback has been reviewed with the Executive Management Team, Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Plan was now ready for approval by Council.

The Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been firmed up and contained a list of measures that were aligned to the Corporate Plan and could be monitored via the performance management programme.

Feedback on the proposed Corporate Plan had been widely positive, with 75% of respondents agreeing with the vision for the District. All feedback on the plan was considered and was used to shape the final iteration of the plan.

There were two further amendments to the version of the Plan that was presented to Cabinet on the 3rd April 2024. Both were discussed at panel and will be updated to the final published version.

The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel had reservations on the emphasis of the Freeport within the Plan and so more balance was awarded to this subject, whilst the focus on housebuilding targets and the progress made within the last financial quarter were positively acknowledged.

Comments from Members on the perception of crime measure and on climate change were noted by Cabinet and acknowledgement to the ongoing work on defining the targets and KPIs was given. It was explained that work with each service unit was underway on developing a 'definition document' to provide the baseline context for each KPI measure to profile each target and assign them to a designated officer.

75 ALLOCATION OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) TO LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**RESOLVED:**

- a) That a supplementary budget of £81,100 be approved, and subsequently approve the list of projects at Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report totalling £1,081.104.84; and
- b) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, in conjunction with the Chair of the Executive Advisory Task and Finish Group, be authorised to make such amendments as they deem appropriate to the approved project lists within 10% of the total budget. Any such amendments will be reported to Cabinet via the financial monitoring reports.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder Planning and Economy presented the proposed list of CIL projects following officer assessment and the Member Task and Finish Group.

The Planning Implementation and Monitoring Team Leader explained that 26 projects had been successful in their application for CIL funding with the list of projects contained in Appendix 1 of the report.

Applications for funding had been assessed via the robust framework set by Cabinet in October 2023 and were evaluated by officers in accordance with the approved criteria which was then scrutinised by the Task and Finish Group.

Cabinet were being asked to approve an additional £81,100 to the already approved £1million. It was explained that the Council already held these funds and therefore would not incur any additional direct cost.

The Council was keen to fund as many projects as possible and would engage with those applicants that were unsuccessful to seek other potential funding opportunities.

The matter of a strategic CIL approach would be deliberated at a future Council date.

76 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet agreed:

- a) The draft responses to representations (attached at Annex 1 to the Cabinet report);
- b) That the revised Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) "Planning for Climate Change" (attached at Annex 2 to the Cabinet report) is formally adopted and published on the Council's website;

- c) That the revised SPD is taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of all relevant applications that are submitted after the date of adoption; and
- d) That any final editorial changes to the document prior to publication be agreed by the Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy / Environment and Sustainability

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability introduced the item and explained that the SPD was now in its final form and would stand as an advisory document that would encourage developers to play their part in building sustainable and resilient buildings that could adapt to climate issues whilst reducing the carbon emissions involved.

It was explained by the Senior Policy Planner that the standards contained within the SPD could not go over and above the Council's adopted local plan nor nationally set policies. However, a primary benefit of the SPD would be in how it sets a base for future NFDC planning policies to be built upon. These policies would be developed during the local plan review which is just beginning.

Members commented on the lack of reference to biodiversity and nature within the SPD. The Senior Policy Planner explained that this document's focus was on tangible outcomes relating to development within the District and that other documents and policies, such as with biodiversity net-gain in planning applications, did concern these matters. The Senior Policy Planner also noted that Biodiversity Net gain is now a national requirement.

It was hoped that developers would take heed of the SPD and seek to install infrastructure such as ground source heat pumps where possible whilst reducing their own carbon footprint when building.

The Senior Policy Planner explained that as part of the SPD adoption process, all Town and Parish Councils will be written to with an explanation of the document and what changes it entails. Furthermore, all Town and Parish Councils are consulted with as a specific consultee on local planning documents. More detail

would be provided as to where the SPD could go in future and how it could help shape policies within the new Local Plan.

77 SOLENT FREEPORT: SECURING A LEGACY FOR THE NEW FOREST

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- a) Agrees that the following represent the priorities for the New Forest in respect of the economic growth which would be achieved through a successfully delivered Solent Freeport:
 - Transport/wider infrastructure
 - Employment and Skills
 - Prosperous Communities
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - The Development of a Local Delivery Plan
- b) Instructs officers to develop a New Forest Freeport Delivery Plan and bring it back to Cabinet for consideration.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

All

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and explained that the Solent Freeport was now in its full delivery phase with Marchwood Solent Gateway Site recently seeing its first spade in the ground. The aim was for the Solent port at Southampton to become a global trading gateway. Alongside this, incentives to support investment on tax sites are now in place and would run until 2031. The ability to retain and reinvest the business rates which result from investment will be in place for 25 years.

It was now for the Council to agree the priorities for the New Forest in respect of the economic growth that would be achieved through a successfully delivered Solent Freeport. The proposed priorities were set out within the report and would be achieved by way of a New Forest Freeport Delivery Plan that officers would develop for Cabinet consideration.

The Strategic Regeneration Advisor informed Cabinet that the forecasted income generation for the next 25 years, identified within the Freeport full business case, was c£500million. This was across the entire Solent Freeport and would not be solely ringfenced for the New Forest. It was therefore vitally important that NFDC put forward a robust and clear delivery plan, shaped by its priorities, to ensure that a good portion of the income generated is reinvested in the District.

The priorities proposed to make up a delivery plan had been supported by the Future New Forest District Partnership, the Steering Group and the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Cabinet acknowledged that skills and development were vital to the success of the New Forest and that it was imperative that the upskilling was delivered through schools, higher education and in the community. Discussions on this matter had taken place between the Leader and the Solent Skills Meeting Group. The New Forest's unique circumstances and opportunities meant that a regional approach to skills and development may not be the most applicable or beneficial to the District and therefore it was vital for NFDC to put forward its own bespoke delivery plan.

Infrastructure improvements were already being seen at the Marchwood Military Port and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy explained that this development was an example of where facilities would be enhanced whilst bringing employment to the area. Other members expressed that the development of modern, efficient infrastructure was fundamental to the District.

Discussions were ongoing regarding the offer of apprenticeships and the offer available to young people in the District. It was agreed that information must be communicated to young people on the opportunities available to them so that they could flourish in the New Forest without the need to leave the area.

78 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet reviewed feedback from Audit Committee and noted the contents of the Strategic Risk Register as part of the 6 monthly review process.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Leaders / All

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the Strategic Risk Register following the 6 monthly review process and explained that most of the risks had been covered, with a specific budget set aside for any potential 'rainy day' issues that may occur.

It was clarified that the blue action points showed the progress of each action alongside the potential risk. The document highlighted the challenges facing the Council, outlined the actionable mitigation strategies attached to these risks, and laid out the proactive approach to assessing risks. A 'risk owner' would be designated to provide updates on actions and mitigation of risks.

CHAIRMAN