

14 SEPTEMBER 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLACE AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 14 September 2023

* Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)

* Cllr Alvin Reid (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Peter Armstrong
* Keith Craze
* Allan Glass
* Matthew Hartmann
* Stephanie Osborne

Councillors:

* Adam Parker
* Malcolm Wade
Jack Davies
Barry Dunning
David Hawkins

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Colm McCarthy
Geoffrey Blunden

Councillors:

Derek Tipp

Also In Attendance:

Officers Attending:

Dean Brunton, James Carpenter, Tim Guymer, Chris Noble, David Norris, Roxanne King and Joe Tyler.

13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr A Reid, for transparency purposes, declared a non-pecuniary interest on item 5, Annual Fees and Charges for 2024 - Car Parking and Keyhaven Moorings. as a Ward Councillor for Milford & Hordle Ward. He made the decision not to speak or vote on the item.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no issues raised in the public participation period.

16 DISCUSSION OF MOTION SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL SEEKING NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCILS SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY BILL

Cllr S Osborne presented her motion to the Panel, originally submitted to Council seeking NFDC's support for the proposed Climate and Ecology Bill. Cllr Osborne read the motion in full and was invited to explain the motion and her reasons for submitting it. The main points were as follows:

- NFDC had declared a climate emergency in October 2021, with a Climate Change and Nature Action Plan agreed in February 2023.
- Current global temperatures were 1.2 degrees centigrade higher than pre-industrial levels.
- According to YouGov, 66% of voters were concerned by climate change; with this being of particular importance to local residents given the New Forest's unique natural makeup.
- NFDC considers the climate impact in all of its decisions, and a Climate Change Manager had been appointed to address this specific issue.
- 237 local authorities across the country were in support of the Climate and Ecology Bill.

The Climate Change Manager summarised the contextual covering report, highlighting the main points:

- Until such time as an action strategy is drafted it is unknown what the details are on implementation of the Climate and Ecology Bill at a local level. The financial or physical impact on the Council is currently unknown.
- However, there is an acknowledgement that nationally, the UK is falling behind its legislated targets and is significantly off track on the delivery of the required actions.
- The Climate and Ecology Bill seeks to strengthen existing commitments and deliver a greater impact in a shorter point of time than is currently happening.
- The Climate and Ecology Bill strategy nor action plan have yet been agreed.
- Businesses, Councils and academics have voiced support for the principles of the Bill.
- NFDC's Climate and Nature Action Plan was agreed in February 2023 and is currently in place for delivery.

The Panel were invited to make comments and ask questions regarding the motion, the main contributions from members were as follows:

- A member raised concern on the practicality and the cost implications of supporting the Bill in its current form, given that it had not been approved by parliament nor had a strategy been finalised. It was suggested that a task and finish group be created to monitor the progress of the Climate and Ecology Bill's progress through parliament and explore the detail of the Bill more closely.
- A Panel member referenced the numerous natural disasters and severe weather that had been experienced around the globe. The unique natural makeup of the Forest meant that severe weather, similar to that experienced elsewhere in the world, would have major implications for the District. The member encouraged the Panel to work outside of the current consensus in order to aim for stricter environmental targets. The Panel member stated that practical strategies were needed at a national level and support for the motion would put pressure on the Government to improve their ...
- UK flying insects had declined by 60% between 2004-2021, demonstrating the destruction of biodiversity in the country over the last 20 years.

- Reference was made to the fact the Bill was awaiting its second reading in the House of Commons. A Panel member expressed reluctance to commit to the Bill whilst it is in this position of progress in Parliament. Further support for a Task and Finish Group to be created was given by the Panel member.
- The Panel heard from one member that precipitation levels would increase 7% per year for every degree increase in global temperatures. Reference to the economy's reliance on the environment was given.
- A Panel member explained that currently, in Parliament, 168 MPs support the Bill currently whilst 482 MPs do not.

It was proposed and seconded that the Panel support the motion in full and recommend to Council that they resolve to implement and action the four points contained within the motion. After more discussion, it was proposed by other members of the Panel that, with regard to the concerns raised during the discussion, that the Panel give its support to the motion in principle and recommend to Council that a Task and Finish Group is created to monitor the progress of the Bill through Parliament and explore the details of the Bill more closely.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairman so that clarity could be sought by Officers on the procedure, given that there was not consensus among the Panel. Once correct advice was sought it was explained that, as per the Council's rules of debate for meetings (Standing Order No. 48), an amendment shall, if it is carried, take the place of the original motion. The Chairman proposed an amendment to the original motion, which was seconded by the Vice-Chairman. The amendment was carried following a unanimous vote in support.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel:

- i) endorses the motion in principle and;
- ii) recommends to Full Council that a Task and Finish Group be created to monitor the progress of the Climate and Ecology Bill through Parliament and explore the detail of the Bill.

17 ANNUAL FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2024 - CAR PARKING AND KEYHAVEN MOORINGS

The Assistant Director of Place and Operations presented the report on Annual Fees and Charges for 2024 for Car Parking and Keyhaven Moorings. The main points highlighted were as follows:

- The Council's car parking fees are set in Autumn and then apply from 1st January the following year.
- There are 44 Car Parks across the District area which are split into either Town & Village Car Parks or Amenity Car Parks.
- Amenity car parks have a seasonal charging structure.
- 32,000 people use the car parks every year, and the car parks offers either short or long parking clocks.
- The Council has not historically raised car parking fees and charges consistently, nor as a minimum in line with inflation. In some cases, fees have not risen since 2018.

- Based on CPI, charges that have not been increased with inflation since 2018 are nearly 40 per cent behind where they would have been if an inflationary increase had been applied annually.
- As of 1st January 2024, it is proposed that most tariffs will increase by £1 pound, except for the 1-hour tariff that will remain at £1 and the up to 20 hours tariff that will increase by £3.
- The decision not to increase the charge for 1 hour parking was made with supporting local businesses in mind.
- Comparable authorities were assessed when reviewing parking charges. Indication is that parking clocks are very low and proposed increase 5.6 of report.
- New Parking Strategy for longer term of strategy to support service in future.
- 10% increase to fees, acknowledging that operation at Keyhaven is different to other harbours or moorings.
- The proposed fees had been drafted with the current financial climate in mind as well as other Council commitments such as the target for net zero. The proposed fees and charges were comparable to other, comparable local authorities.
- In the context of charges being frozen for 6 years in many cases, it was deemed a reasonable step to increase certain fees.

The Panel made several comments on the report, highlighted as follows:

- A Panel member expressed support for the proposed fees and charges, citing the value for money offered by the Council's various parking clock options
- In contrast, a Panel member raised concern over the 57% increase for the annual parking clock and a 33% increase for the short stay parking clock. The member suggested that the increases would deter people from using Council car parks, having a possible impact on local businesses.
- The Panel heard from one member that this increase would enable the Council to run effectively in its running. On the range of fees and charges, with some not increasing since 2018, the Panel member deemed it a reasonable increase in order for the Council to continue delivering its services for residents.
- On the percentage increase of rises, one member was concerned that this increase would actually see revenue decrease if people were deterred.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel recommends to Cabinet:

- i. That the 2024 town and amenity car park tariffs be increased by £1.00 per tariff, except for the 1-hour tariff which will remain at £1.00, and the "up to 20 hours" tariff which will increase by £3.
- ii. That the 1-hour tariff is applicable in all car parks throughout the year.
- iii. That the increase in charges for NFDC parking clocks be agreed; namely
 - Short stay annual clocks from £30.00 to £40.00
 - Long stay annual clocks from £140 to £220
 - Long stay quarterly clocks from £40 to £65

- iv. That the Council allocate 4 days of free parking in town centre car parks to support local businesses during December 2023 as detailed in section 7.
- v. That the Keyhaven fees and charges as detailed at Appendix A to the report be approved, and;

That the Panel notes the intention to develop a Parking Strategy.

18 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - FRAMEWORK FOR CIL EXPENDITURE

The Planning Monitoring Team Leader presented the report on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Framework for CIL Expenditure. The main points highlighted were as follows:

- The report contained a framework for expenditure allocations, as set out in Appendix A.
- The proposal was for £1m of the currently held funds to be released for local bids.
- Contextually, the Council's CIL programme began in 2014 and saw CIL charges introduced in 2015. The current CIL pot stands at around £7million, excluding other money released to Towns & Parishes.
- The proposed release of £1m would allow the Council to achieve its strategic aims across the District whilst seeking improvements to local infrastructure.
- Further CIL contributions were expected to be received over the next 5 years, due to the development of the Council's strategic sites.
- The Officer's report also recommended publishing a guide for Towns & Parishes, providing advice on how to spend their CIL allocations, which in some cases could be 15-25% of CIL, depending on whether they have a neighbourhood plan.
- The final proposal was for a Task and Finish Group to be created in order to advise the Portfolio Holder on how to spend the allocated £1m.

Questions:

- Clarification was sought on the current level of CIL monies held by the Council and what amount was currently allocated to projects across the District. It was clarified by the Officer that £8mil had been invoiced to developers but only £7mil had been received at present. Currently, CIL expenditure is primarily allocated towards habitat mitigation and the Council spends £800,000 on this per year. The Panel were told that the Council was now in a position to open this CIL funding further.
- Following a member question, the Officer explained that developers don't pay CIL when they pay affordable housing or for their own homes, this comes via an application for relief whereby they will need to meet certain criteria. It was clarified that communities that have affordable housing can receive CIL funding as CIL does not need to be used within the direct area that the development occurred.
- The Panel were supportive of the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Panel considers the report and recommends to Cabinet that they:

- Agree to the proposed introduction of a framework for CIL expenditure to align funds to identified infrastructure needs.
- Agree to release £1m of CIL in 2023/2024 to fund local infrastructure in the short term.
- Agree to the publication of the parish council CIL information note at Appendix C.
- Agree to the proposal to report back to Cabinet by the end of the calendar year 2024 with a review of the allocation of the £1m and to finalise the framework for future years.
- Agree to establishing a Task and Finish Group to review the proposed CIL allocations so that they may directly advise the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy. The terms of reference and composition of the Group will be agreed by the Leader of the Council in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, as an Executive Advisory Task and Finish Group.

19 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability addressed the Panel. He gave the following update:

- The Portfolio Holder had, in the last two weeks, visited three of the District's depots: Lymington, Ringwood and Totton to meet with staff members.
- The Council's service showcase was a success and the Portfolio Holder met with various Council crews and staff members to discuss their concerns and ideas for improvements.
- On fly tipping, there had been a spate of concerning incidents across the District and the Portfolio Holder reiterated that the council would continue to work with partners to address this issue and that ideas such as the placement of CCTV cameras and/or signage would provide a proactive approach to catch and prosecute offenders.
- The Solar Together Hampshire project had recently been launched with Council partners to enable the purchase of Solar Panels at below market price.
- Barton public toilets would be open and operational within the next few weeks following a slight delay in the supply chain.
- Coastal groin repairs would be taking place in Autumn starting on 25 September with works being carried out by local contractor.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy addressed the Panel. He gave the following update:

- A new Chief Executive of the Freeport had been appointed and the programme was moving into the delivery phase, with 4 tax sites to be established across the District that will contribute 5000 more jobs across the lifespan of the scheme.
- The Rural England Prosperity grants fund had been launched and could be utilised for infrastructure in the community and would be open to applicants until the 31st October 2023. The scheme would run in parallel to the Council's own Capital Grants fund. These were being promoted to all District Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary and community associations too.

- The Council's start-up business support scheme had been a success and it saw 70 of the District's residents supported in the development of new businesses. The option to renew this scheme next year was being reviewed currently.

Following the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy's update, questions and comments were given by the Panel. These were as follows:

- There was concern from the Panel that the District's infrastructure would be unable to meet the demands placed on it by the increase in workers created by the Freeport. The Portfolio Holder explained that the predicted increase in employment would not be immediate but would be over the lifespan of the Freeport.
- A Panel member stated that the Government were undertaking a railway review and new systems were being considered over the next 5 years.
- Concern was raised on the viability of railway development in the Waterside areas of the District. It was heard that Hampshire County Council would not be funding a viability assessment on railway development.
- The Panel expressed a desire to be involved in the progress of any developments in the District so as to ensure that infrastructure on a larger scale would support the projections in the near future.

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20 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

That the following dates of meetings for 2024/2025 (all Thursdays commencing at 18:00) be agreed:

20 June 2024
12 September 2024
16 January 2025
13 March 2025

22 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLACE AND SUSTAINABILITY O&S PANEL

The Chairman explained that there had been three Cllr Call-Ins on the Shared Prosperity Fund Portfolio Holder Decision that was published on 8 September 2023. Therefore, a special panel meeting would be arranged before the deadline of Friday 29 September to consider the call-ins. All members would be informed of the date and time as soon as possible.

CHAIRMAN