

7 AUGUST 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 7 August 2024

* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Geoffrey Blunden

* Jeremy Heron

*Present

Councillors:

* Dan Poole

* Derek Tipp

In attendance:

Councillors:

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

Councillors:

Alan O'Sullivan
Joe Reilly
Janet Richards
Steve Rippon-Swaine
Neil Tungate
Malcolm Wade

Officers Attending:

Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Richard Knott, Tanya Coulter,
Rebecca Drummond, Andrew Mills, Ryan Stevens, Joe Tyler, Matt Wisdom and
Saqib Yasin.

Apologies

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

1 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader announced that the Council were awarded Employer of the Year at Brockenhurst College's Gala Awards, an annual event to mark the end of the academic year. The Council were given the award for continually strengthening their relationship with the college, as well as in recognition of the joint working on improving apprenticeships and work experience.

The Leader explained that the New Forest Show had taken place and the corporate plan themes of 'People, place and prosperity' was the Council's focus. The Council welcomed partners to the stand to launch the corporate plan and to celebrate the New Forest District Council's (NFDC) 50th year anniversary. Over the three-day event, show-goers took part in the games and activities on the Council's stand, including building a puzzle house, a mixed recycling challenge, a litter-themed bean bag toss and making pledges for the environment.

The Leader announced that the corporate plan and the 50 facts for NFDC's 50th year had been summarised in a 'Pocket Guide to NFDC'. A copy of the guide had been put in all Councillor's pigeonholes for their information. The pocket guides were distributed to the public at the New Forest Show and copies of the document would be held at the Council's Information Offices and also be given to staff. The document contains contact details, a guide to who does what, and the New Forest Code.

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2024 be confirmed and signed.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

5 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2023/24

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the following::

- a) the Annual Performance Report for 2023/24;
- b) the provisional outturn of the General Fund revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24;
- c) the provisional outturn of the Housing Revenue Account and capital budgets for 2023/24; and
- d) the year-end rephasings, as included within the provisional outturn figures.

That the Cabinet request to Council approval of;

- e) the establishment of a new Corporate Priorities Reserves, with an initial contribution of £1.5 million in 2023/24 and note the transfer of £262,000 in 2023/24 to enhance the Treasury Management Reserve.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Leaders / all

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and explained that there had been significant challenges over the period of the last corporate plan 2020-2024. The report reflected the Council's many achievements despite the challenges and responds to the commitment of the last corporate plan (spanning 2020-2024).

The Leader referred to the portfolio highlights contained within the report to demonstrate the Council's achievements delivered in the final year of the previous corporate plan and the first year of the current administration.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services explained that the service budget at Portfolio Holder level had come in tightly on budget, with a few variations outside of Portfolio service budgets. These variations included additional interest earnings of £2.132million, a one-off VAT refund of £668,000 and a business rates additional income of £701,000.

The Council had increased the revenue budget contribution to capital programme financing by £1.1million, the corporate priority reserve had been established with a transfer of £1.5million, the treasury management reserve had been topped up of £262,000 and the capital programme reserve, which funded projects like the Hardley Depot project, had seen a further allocation of £767,000.

The Portfolio Holder explained that there had been some rephasing to the budgets due to circumstances beyond the Council's control, such as delays to projects, but that this was not to be unexpected due to the ambitious nature of the Council.

The Performance and Insight Manager outlined the report. It was explained that the report provided an overview of the Council's performance over the last financial year, April 2023-2024, against the former corporate plan (2020-2024). The report set out the provisional outturn results for both the revenue and capital budgets.

The general fund budget outturn for the year confirmed the occurrence of three main variations sitting outside of the service budget portfolios, which included project and grant income, with some rephasing from the 2023-2024 financial year into the current year. The outturn spend of the Capital Programme delivery, within the housing revenue account, stood at 96% of the £27.6million original budget.

The report had been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview & Scrutiny Panel in July where members were able to pass comment and ask questions.

A member of the Council asked whether the proposed Hampshire County Council (HCC) cuts to services would impact NFDC budgets. The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and Transformation explained that the Council responded to HCC's consultation and that their budget position would be considered and accounted for by the Council as part of its own budget setting and medium-term planning. Detailed budget preparations had not yet commenced for 2025/26 but the

Council was very conscious of HCC's position and would have to be very cautious of taking on any additional budgetary liability.

6 CCTV – PROPOSED EXPANSION ACROSS THE DISTRICT

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed recommendations for the expansion of the public space CCTV camera network, adding 21 cameras across the district referred to as 'phase one' be agreed; and
2. That following completion of phase one, the existing 29 analogue cameras on the public space network are upgraded to digital capability be approved, thus enabling the analogue transmission to end, creating opportunities to reduce the annual network costs associated with transmission of footage from the cameras to the control room.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Community, Safety and Wellbeing

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing introduced the report and explained that the matter had been considered by the Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel and that the recommendations within the report were supported in full by the Panel. The Portfolio Holder endorsed the expanded CCTV coverage proposed within the report and the resultant installation of 21 new cameras across the District as part of 'Phase One'.

The Strategic Director of Housing and Communities explained that extensive work had been undertaken to identify the locations for the additional CCTV cameras across the District. There were strict criteria set by the down by the Information Commissioner's Office and the steering group assessed all the proposed locations alongside this set of rules. Some of the sites were dismissed during this process and Cabinet were reassured that each location has passed the necessary test.

The 21 proposed CCTV cameras would be sited across a combination of rural and urban locations. Some of the rural location installations would be supported by additional funding from the 'Save the Streets' campaign. Remaining funding would be provided by the capital scheme. Not all of the allocated funding was required for Phase One and therefore a second phase of work would take place whereby the

existing 56 cameras would be replaced, moving to digital cameras with a long-term positive impact on annual costs.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services praised the clear and precise methodology in establishing the number and placement of the proposed cameras.

A member of the Council asked a question on the data that was captured by the existing cameras and whether police requested to view the footage relating to recorded incidents. The Strategic Director of Housing and Communities confirmed he would investigate this request and come back to the member with a response after the meeting.

7 TRANSFORMATION BUSINESS CASE - CUSTOMER & DIGITAL SERVICES (INCLUDING ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN) AND APPLETREE COURT

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet (subject to the required Council approval to funding):
 - I. Approved the Customer & Digital Services (including Organisational Design) business case at Appendix A and adoption of the preferred future organisational design option Bv2;
 - II. Supported the intention to let out the south wing of Appletree Court (ATC) to third party tenants as set out in Appendix B;
 - III. Noted the opportunity to further enhance ATC through works to the ground floor north wing, but these to be progressed subject to further approval (at additional cost), dependant on the success of the letting activity; and
 - IV. Delegated responsibility to oversee delivery of these recommendations to the Transformation Programme Board.
2. That Cabinet recommend to Council approval to:
 - V. allocate £2.709m on an invest-to-save basis to deliver the necessary technology and organisational changes to deliver the preferred future organisational design option; and
 - VI. allocate up to £1.75m for improvements to the East wing of ATC on an invest-to-save basis, to facilitate the third party letting of the south wing and the generation of c£300,000 per annum in income.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Council

PORTFOLIO:

Leaders / Finance and Corporate / all

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and explained that the item responds to the objectives that are at the centre of what the Council does, namely the serving of residents. The Leader explained that NFDC wants residents and service users to interact with the Council in a modern, efficient and effective way that best suits their needs. The use of the Council's assets was highlighted as an important element of the overall transformation programme and the changes to customer and digital services alongside a change in the use of accommodation could make a positive contribution to the Council's financial sustainability.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services highlighted how the Covid pandemic and the developments in technology had irrevocably changed the way that organisations work. Technology now supported hybrid working and remote working, and therefore the Council would need to reevaluate the use of its offices as it adapts to these developments. Therefore, the proposed change in use of the Council's accommodation at Appletree Court could have both a financially and sustainably positive impact.

The Assistant Director of Transformation provided an overview of the report. The report presented two invest-to-save business cases in support of the transformation programme and its 4 key themes of: Customer and Digital Services, people and capabilities, assets and accommodation and finance and delivery.

The first business case at Appendix A enables the implementation of the transformation programme around the Customer and Digital Services. It sets out a clear future organisational design for the Council to leverage new technology, process redesign and structures to improve the customer experience and the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

The second business case at Appendix B considers options to exploit the commercial opportunities of ATC and make better use of currently underutilised office accommodation. This marks the first element of a wider transformational work on assets and accommodation. The implementation of organisational design and the Appletree Court works would provide opportunities to release net financial benefits whilst supporting the wider transformation objectives.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) identified a targeted saving of £1.75 million from the transformation programme and the business case contained proposals to help contribute towards the delivery of this saving in line with the wider objectives of the transformation programme.

A total funding requirement of £4.459 million against an estimated annual net benefit of £1.54million would be realised with the anticipated payback period being 5-6 years. It is expected that the financial benefits would be delivered through a combination of mechanisms. These included Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff reductions, improved technology and rental income through use of Appletree Court.

It was highlighted that the report had been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Panel supported the recommendations within the report and recognised their role in monitoring the delivery of the transformation programme.

A member of the Council asked whether the transformation programme would result in the closure of all NFDC satellite offices across the District. It was confirmed that the report did not recommend the closure of any of the information offices across the District and that the Cabinet had committed to keeping a face-to-face option for contacting the Council available. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services reassured the Council member that the information offices and maintaining cooperation with the Town and Parish Councils was a vital part of delivering services to residents of the District.

Another Council member asked a question on equality and diversity impact assessments. The member was reassured by The Assistant Director of Transformation that any, and all, service changes would involve considerations on the impact of service users and a formal process of specific, equality impact assessments would be undertaken.

A question was posed on the FTE staff reductions referenced as part of the programme. Cabinet heard that once the proposed technology was in place, observations would be made on staff turnover, staff vacancies and the redeployment of staff and where this may lead to natural reductions.

8 INTRODUCTION OF A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK / CONSIDERATION OF A RELATED MOTION REFERRED BY COUNCIL

RESOLVED:

1.1 That Cabinet approved the Performance Management Framework.

1.2 That Cabinet agree the response to the related motion, detailed in section 8 of the report, and recommends this to Council.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Leader/All

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Leader introduced the report and explained that the framework sets out how the Council will deliver on its commitments, ensuring that the delivery of the

corporate plan is on track. The Leader acknowledged the proposed Council motion response included within the report and confirmed that the proposal had her full support.

The Performance and Insight Manager explained that the corporate plan would be underpinned by the suitable management framework which would monitor the progress of the Council's commitments. This would be done by use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) whilst a NFDC Handbook KPI definitions would remove ambiguity around definitions and terms whilst providing clear accountability for all measures.

A member of the Council welcomed the improvements to the new set of proposed KPIs and acknowledged that they would enable the monitoring of the new Corporate Plan's effectiveness.

**9 REVIEW OF THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME
RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet to approved the following:

- a) The adoption of the eligibility criteria for the Revenue Grant scheme, as detailed in section. 6.1;
- b) That the delivery model for the Revenue Grants scheme, as detailed in section 7, be adopted;
- c) That the Community Grants Task and Finish Group explore and consider a Community lottery funded scheme to run alongside the Community Grants programme, as detailed in section 7.7; and
- d) The process and eligibility criteria for the Capital Grant scheme, as detailed in section 8, be adopted

That the changes to the Community Grants scheme be adopted for the application window in 2024, with grants awarded from 1 April 2025.

KEY DECISION:

Yes

PORTFOLIO:

Community, Safety and Wellbeing

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing introduced the report. In the summary, the portfolio holder explained that the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel had given their unanimous support to the report and

its recommendations. The review was important given the record number of applicants during last year’s process and the desire to maintain strong member engagement on the matter.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Service Manager provided an overview of the report and explained that this was a review of the community grant programme which was formed by two separate strands, these being the Revenue Grant scheme and Capital Grants scheme.

The review was recommended to Cabinet in February 2024 to follow the new corporate plan. The eligibility criteria had also been reviewed for the revenue grants scheme. Several options were considered for this, the preferred option contained a matrix model that would separate applicants into an ABC banding system, with up to a 3-year course of funding to enable successful organisations to be funded to support working toward our priorities. A community lottery scheme would also be considered by the Task and Finish Group, to explore additional and further funding opportunities for organisations. The capital grants scheme delivery model had also been reviewed to streamline the process and reduce administration. A review of the webpage would take place with more information on funding opportunities for local organisations. This way, the Council can better direct prospective applicants to the full and correct information.

A member of the Council highlighted that Option 2 was the Panel’s preferred choice. Reference was made to the CIL grant scheme which utilised a similar matrix system and how this cut down on staff and member time as well as resources, highlighting the potential efficiencies that could be made from implementing Option 2 going forward.

Another member raised a question on paragraph 8.2 of the report, noting point ‘f’) that for Capital Grants states *Town and Parish Councils will be ineligible to apply* and that a further review would take place at a later date to align both the Capital Grants scheme and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) scheme. The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources and Transformation explained that the Council would imminently be considering the CIL scheme with a report coming to Cabinet in October 2024 for their consideration. Any potential amendments required for this scheme would be able to come back to Cabinet at a future date.

A Council member expressed that they would like more CIL money to be provided to Town and Parish Councils. The Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability explained that with CIL, Town and Parish Councils already received 15% of the money collected (and up to 25% if they had a Neighbourhood Plan). The last figures on standard CIL allocation showed that £800,000 had been provided to Town and Parish Councils but there was recognition of the need for a strategic use of CIL in the future.

10 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED:

1. That appointments to the New Forest National Park Authority, be agreed as follows, for the remainder of the four year term ending May 2027:-

Conservative (2)	Liberal Democrats (1)	Independents (1)
Cllr Barry Dunning	Cllr Caroline Rackham	Cllr Joe Reilly
Cllr Derek Tipp		

2. That appointments to the Associated British Ports (ABP) Southampton Port Consultative Committee, be agreed, as follows, for the remainder of the four year term ending May 2027:-

(2 Members)

- Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy (Cllr Derek Tipp)
- Local Ward Councillor (Cllr Richard Young)

KEY DECISION:

No

PORTFOLIO:

Leader's

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

DISCUSSION:

None

CHAIRMAN