

4 SEPTEMBER 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 4 September 2024

* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Geoffrey Blunden

* Jeremy Heron

*Present

Councillors:

* Dan Poole

* Derek Tipp

In attendance:

Councillors:

Steve Clarke
Alan O'Sullivan
Joe Reilly

Councillors:

Steve Rippon-Swaine
Malcolm Wade
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Richard Knott, Tanya Coulter, James Clarke, Steve Cook, Chris Noble, Ryan Stevens and Joe Tyler

Apologies

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

11 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2024 be confirmed and signed.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

14 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (BASED ON PERFORMANCE APRIL - JUNE 2024 INCLUSIVE)

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet

- 1) Noted the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund, HRA and Capital.
- 2) Approved the supplementary budgets of £50,000 and £90,000 in the Housing Revenue Account for additional trees maintenance costs.
- 3) Approved the supplementary budget provision of £125,000 for additional operating costs of the Green Waste service, funded from additional income from the Green Waste service.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance and Corporate.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Finance introduced the report and explained that it was the first monitoring report of the 2024-2025 financial year. One of the few supplementary budget items for approval was £125,000 additional funding for the Green Waste scheme, however this would be more than covered by additional revenue from the Green Waste scheme itself. It was heard that the Green Waste scheme was proving very popular with residents and that there had been a large number of subscribers. The Portfolio Holder referenced some of the additional costs, such as the Appletree Court East Wing roof repair but explained that this cost had been met from within overall maintenance budgets. Finally, Cabinet heard that car parking income levels were lower than forecast but were still significantly higher than previous years. Cabinet understood the lower-than-expected car parking levels to be partly due to the weather conditions over the Summer. Capital expenditure was listed within the report and the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there were a couple of variations to note.

The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources S151 and Transformation supported the summary provided by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Finance.

A member of the Council asked whether car parking prices would be increased next year, to which the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Finance explained that when budgets are reviewed each year, every aspect of Council income and expenditure would be assessed and revised as necessary.

15 CUSTOMER STRATEGY REPORT**RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet recommend that Council approve the Customer Strategy.

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance and Corporate.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Finance introduced the report and emphasised that the core principle of the new Customer Strategy was to put the customer at the heart of Council services. Cabinet heard that the Council would continue to put its residents first and would continue to offer direct contact channels and face-to-face meeting time through its various offices.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Service Manager summarised the new Customer Strategy and explained that extensive research had been undertaken and feedback had been gathered through internal and external consultation and that from this, the needs of the customer could be understood and assessed/improved. The Strategy would ensure that nobody would be excluded from contacting the Council and being assisted where possible. To ensure this, staff, residents and Town & Parish Councils were among the groups who had been consulted during the development of the Strategy.

From the insight gained and feedback from the consultation and subsequent development of the Strategy, there were four key customer outcomes considered. In order to achieve the outcomes, the four key principles would be:

- Putting the customer at the heart of what the Council does.
- Providing customers with a consistent experience through all interactions with the Council.
- Utilising technology to meet customer needs.
- Using data to shape and improve service delivery.

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Service Manager explained that within the Strategy was an Action Plan which provides details on the range of activities, along with timescales, to be completed. The Action Plan would enable the Strategy to meet its customer outcomes.

Finally, it was explained that the Strategy supports the new corporate plan and transformation programme and would then move the customer experience forward by investing in staff and technology to modernise services and embody a culture of putting customers at the heart of Council business.

A member of the Council asked a question on hard-to-reach residents in the District. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Finance explained that the Council would not be able to reach each and every resident in the District but reassured the Cabinet that NFDC worked cooperatively with other organisations locally to ensure that customers are still supported and signposted to the authorities that can assist them. The Leader gave the example of the information boards used at the New Forest Show, along with informative Council Z-cards, that could be disseminated across Town & Parish Councils to put the Council's contact channels and information in the heart of the various communities.

16 CHRISTCHURCH BAY & HARBOUR FLOOD & COASTAL EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT (FCERM) STRATEGY

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend that Council:

- i. approve and adopt the recommended leading options identified in the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for the New Forest 44 District Council area, subject to securing the necessary funding contributions.
- ii. in approving and adopting the strategy, commits to developing a Funding Strategy that will seek to identify and aim to secure the necessary funding contributions to enable the national or local leading options to be implemented via future capital schemes and maintenance of existing/new schemes, noting that the exact amount of contributions will need to be confirmed as schemes are developed.

That Cabinet:

- iii. notes that there is no statutory duty upon NFDC as the Coast Protection Authority to undertake coast protection works, nor does the adoption of the strategy bind NFDC to commit to the provision of any funding for the delivery of the identified options.
- iv. notes that throughout the development of the strategy extensive engagement and consultation has been undertaken with: 1. Residents & wider communities (including landowners, community groups, organisations and individuals) 2. Key stakeholders, 3. Officers & members

KEY DECISION:

No.

PORTFOLIO:

Environment and Sustainability.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability introduced the report and explained that the Strategy identified the future risks to the District's communities as a result of sea level rise, climate change and the increasing number of storms. By identifying the flood and erosion threats facing the coastline, the Strategy provides risk management measures to mitigate against this, along with the funding requirements needed to deliver the identified options.

The Portfolio Holder emphasised that despite the significant financial requirements needed to implement the Strategy's identified options, there was no obligation for NFDC to meet these costs. Work would, however, continue with the Council's partners (such as BCP Council and the Environment Agency((EA)) to aim to develop a funding plan to meet these costs.

The Service Manager of Coastal summarised the detailed, technical report and explained that the Strategy covered the coastline from Christchurch Harbour to Hurst Spit. A further strategy was being considered, covering Hurst Spit to Lyminster River, due for completion by September 2026. A strategy for the Eastern side of the coast, where risk is primarily through flooding, would potentially be developed by the EA following the completion of current projects.

Work on the FCERM Strategy started in 2021 alongside BCP and the EA. Development and creation of the Strategy had been fully funded by grant funding through Central Government. Now, both BCP and NFDC are going through the process of adopting the Strategy, with the EA expected to give assurance to the strategy in early 2025. The Strategy itself identifies the long-term risks over a 100-year period to the properties, assets and environment and considers approaches on how to manage those risks. The Strategy aligns with the Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) already in existence from 2010 and the strategic element means that the Strategy spans boundaries, enabling collaborative work between various authorities.

The existing defences in place are 70 years old and at the end of their life expectancy, which was demonstrated by some failures along Milford frontage. From this, the Strategy identifies that there are 1300 homes at risk of erosion, generally split 50/50 between Barton and Hordle Clifftop Milford on Sea. 140 homes are at risk of flooding in the East of the Milford area, with car parks, public toilets and beach huts all facing the same risks.

On cost, the Barton frontage options of cliff stabilisation and drainage, would cost around £27million with only around £3mil in grant aid. For Hordle to Milford on Sea,

the scheme cost, depending on which option was taken, would be between £10-£30mil with only around £4mil in grant aid.

Engagement with local residents and stakeholders had taken place and would continue to take place, both in person and online.

Members of the Cabinet thanked the Officers and congratulated them on all of the hard, detailed work that they had undertaken throughout the process.

Members of the Council were reassured that there would not be a funding obligation upon NFDC.

Cabinet was informed, following a comment on a strategy for the Eastern coastline of the District, that a senior EA officer would be attending the Place & Sustainability O&S Panel in January 2025 to talk through the members' concerns on flooding.

17 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend Council adopt the Strategic Risk Register.

KEY DECISION:

No.

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 in light of the new Corporate Plan for 2024-2028 the Council had revised its Strategic Risk Register to reflect the current risks facing NFDC. The Leader noted the valuable input of the Audit Committee toward the Strategic Risk Register (SRR). It was emphasised how important it was for the Council to understand the significant risks that may impact its communities.

The Insurance and Risk Officer explained that risk management aimed to identify the risks that may impact on the Council achieving its objectives. Its purpose is to evaluate, design and implement effective measures to reduce both the likelihood and potential impact of these risks occurring. The SRR outlines the most significant, overarching risks to achieving the current Corporate Plan and the proposed actions to mitigate these risks.

The risks had been identified through collaboration between senior and executive council officers and Portfolio Holders to ensure a unified approach in identifying and recording these risks.

The Insurance and Risk Officer highlighted some of the updates to the SRR following the Audit Committee's input and further consideration to the recent, global ICT outage. These changes had been integrated into the SRR.

It was emphasised that the SRR was a 'living document' and would evolve over its lifespan in order to adapt to the potential risks that may arise.

A member of the Cabinet acknowledged how each of the eight identified risks have all been marked with a separate improvement outcome.

A member of the Council posed a question on Risk 6 and the wording of the lead statement on responding to any political change that impacts the District. The Chief Executive reassured the member that the Executive Management Team would take this into account and would seek to escalate and mitigate any detrimental impact that political change may have on the Council.

CHAIRMAN