

2 OCTOBER 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 2 October 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
Jack Davies
Philip Dowd
Allan Glass

Councillors:

Alan O'Sullivan
Joe Reilly
Janet Richards
John Sleep
Malcolm Wade
Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Dean Brunton, James Carpenter, Andrew Herring, Roxanne King, Richard Knott, Liz Mockeridge, Karyn Punchard, James Smith, Karen Wardle, Josie West, Paul Whittles and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Poole.

18 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reported on some key announcements and developments since the last Cabinet meeting as follows:

The community safety team this year had held seven engagement events where 455 residents gave their opinions. She was pleased to report that the results show that 98.7% of respondents were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with living in the New Forest. 97.3% of participants felt "very safe" or "fairly safe" during the day, with 84.8% feeling the same at night. Practical advice was offered on crime prevention and it was discussed how the council and partners of Safer New Forest work as a collective to keep the New Forest a low crime area.

The elections team had been busy organising the Fawley Parish Council by-election on 3 October, as well as the district by-election for the Barton and Becton ward and the New Milton Town Council Barton and Becton ward by-election on 24 October.

The team had been supporting the administration of the Verderers of the New Forest election on Tuesday 26 November, with 4 polling stations being set up in Lyndhurst, Fordingbridge, Lymington and Ringwood.

The elections team had also been contacting residents to make sure the electoral register was up to date. This had been done by contacting residents by email or post, and canvassers had been knocking on doors of households.

And finally, two parks in New Milton had been upgraded to enhance recreational green spaces in the New Forest. The improvements were part of the Green Way recreational mitigation programme funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy. Carrick Wood and Ashington Park now have new seating areas, improved and accessible footpaths and bridge, and new planting to support and enrich local wildlife habitats.

19 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2024 be confirmed and signed.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

22 WASTE PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the waste programme timeline, attached at Appendix A be approved; and
- (ii) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability and the Waste Management Programme Board, to keep the roadmap at Appendix B under review and agree any minor variations to the waste programme.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

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 reported that the new waste and recycling collection service would go live next year. The introduction of the new service would help to address the environmental and climate change objective by increasing recycling, reducing emissions and reducing littering from sacks. The timeline for the service roll out had been updated and would be carried out in three phases. The Portfolio Holder praised the hard work of officers in developing the programme. It was recognised that this was a critical service to the Council and it would be a big change for residents. For the first time residents would be able to separate their food waste out to be collected weekly, with fortnightly collections for residual waste and recycling. The Portfolio Holder looked forward to seeing the roll out of the first phase in June 2025.

The Waste Programme Director highlighted that the three phases of service roll out was detailed in Appendix A. The Lymington area would be the first area to roll out the new collection service, commencing in June 2025, this would be followed by the Ringwood area in October 2025 and the Waterside and Hardley area in March 2026. Appendix B provided more detail of the road map over an 18 month period to explain the work involved in each phase of the roll out.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate was delighted to see the roll out timetable of the new service, recognising it would be a major change to the way the service would be delivered. It would see an improvement to the recycling rate as well as environmental improvements. He highlighted that the roll out of the garden waste collection service with wheeled bins had been well received with residents and he was confident that the wider service would be equally popular. He requested that information be readily available to residents in relation the collection day and what waste / recycling was due to be collected.

A non Cabinet member asked about the appeal process residents would have, should they feel their property was unsuitable to have wheeled bins, recognising that surveys had been carried out by Keep Britain Tidy to consider the suitability of properties in the District. In response, the Waste Programme Director reported that the survey work would consider the suitability of properties and that operational staff would be involved in determining the suitability of properties for wheeled bins. It was recognised that an appeals process would need to be set up.

The issue of communication with local residents was raised by a non Cabinet member, and assurance was sought that clear information would be provided to residents on this major change. There was a discussion about using the wheeled bins in advance of the official roll out, as residents might experience storage issues for multiple bins as well as the continued problem of bag strikes causing littering. The Portfolio Holder responded and confirmed that communication would be at the heart of the process and the changes would be clearly communicated. The Waste Programme Director clarified that the wheeled bins could not be used in advance of the official roll out of the service and that this would be incorporated into the communication strategy.

23 REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- (i) Agreed the revised timescales for the Local Plan;
- (ii) Agreed to the revised version of the Local Development Scheme and for this to be published on the Council's website; and
- (iii) Agreed to a call for sites to be held during 2024 for potential sites.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy presented the report recognising that the Local Development Scheme set out a programme to produce documents to form the Local Plan over the next three to four years. It would be necessary to keep the timetable under review as a result of any changes to Government policy. There would be a call for potential development sites as part of the process to consider the land available to be included in the Local Plan.

The Planning Policy Team Leader clarified that paragraph 12 of the report, detailed the request for submission for sites for specific land uses and that this would be the start of the process. As part of the call for sites, officers would welcome sites to be submitted for consideration and that these would be reviewed and assessed.

24 UPDATE TO THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

RESOLVED:

That a 6-week consultation be agreed on the proposed amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement (changes set out in Appendix 1, shown in red) to inform a future Cabinet decision on whether to adopt the revised document.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the report recognising that the Statement of Community Involvement had last been revised in 2020 and needed amending to provide up to date hyperlinks and to reflect changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. It detailed how the council would consult on the development of the Local Plan, on planning applications and how the Council would liaise with others over the allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The document set out the minimum consultation to be carried out, at the various stages of the planning process.

The Planning Officer further emphasised that the revised Statement of Community Involvement set out the minimum level of consultation but that officers would carry out additional engagement and consultation, if considered necessary.

25 NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS – APPROACH, GOVERNANCE, AND RESOURCING**RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet:

- (i) noted the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 in relation to the process by which Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are determined and agrees for the council to be involved in future projects in its role as a host authority;
- (ii) delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Place Operations and Sustainability to manage the District Council's involvement in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy and, depending on the scale and nature of the project, the Leader of the Council as appropriate; and
- (iii) Agreed that Planning Performance Agreements be sought from promoters and applicants for each project at the earliest stage to cover the District Council's costs involved in accordance with the key principles set out in para 37.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the report reporting that the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) were planning applications which would be determined by the Secretary of State rather than the local planning authority. In order for them to be considered as NSIPs, the developer would need to apply for a Development Consent Order with the Planning Inspectorate. It was anticipated that two of these infrastructure projects would be forthcoming within the district. There would be various stages involved in the consultation process and it was important for the council to actively participate in order to get the best outcome for local residents. Delegated authority was sought to the Strategic Director of Place Operations and Sustainability to manage involvement. Members would be consulted wherever possible, and the Portfolio Holder would be involved in this. It was important for the council to agree to enter into planning performance agreements in order to cover reasonable costs from the applicant.

The Planning Implementation and Monitoring Team Leader reported that NSIP projects would take a minimum of 2.5 years to complete, but could take up to 4. It was highlighted that the recent consultation on the CO2 pipeline did not form part of the formal NSIP process and that the two projects detailed within paragraph 20 of the report were not formal NSIP projects at this stage.

A concern was raised by a non Cabinet member regarding consultation on these projects, recognising that the council needed to be properly resourced in order to respond to any consultation, and that these projects would have a significant impact on the local community. In particular, it was felt there was a need to involve of the local towns and parish councils affected by these infrastructure projects.

The Strategic Director of Place Operations and Sustainability agreed that it was important for the council to form a view and respond to the proposals, which would need to be appropriately resourced. A mechanism was proposed to be put in place to resource the consultation responses, through Planning Performance Agreements which would be funded by the developer. It was expected that the District Council would work closely with the Town and Parish Councils in understanding their views, as part of any response. The first step, however, would be to meet with the developers to set out the expectations around the need for Planning Performance Agreements and the resources required.

26 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK AND THE USE OF STRATEGIC CIL**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the revised CIL Expenditure Framework and communication strategy attached at Appendix 2 and 3 be adopted;
- (ii) That the allocations and approach to strategic element of CIL be approved; and
- (iii) That the progression of the five identified projects be approved, noting that formal decision making in respect of projects as they progress will be in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

PORTFOLIO:

Planning and Economy

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the report reporting that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was an important source of funding for local infrastructure projects. The report explained the process in which decisions would be made to allocate CIL funding and provide infrastructure in line with the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

The identification process to fund of five major projects, addressing local need was set out and covered a wide geographical spread. £4.5m was proposed to be allocated to progress these projects, leaving around £4.5m of CIL funds for future consideration. To support cultural development, it was proposed to allocate £150k to this sector as well as a further 2% of future CIL receipts for the life of the current Corporate Plan. Finally, a further £1m was proposed to be made available to be made available to fund bids to local small scale infrastructure projects, following a similar process to that of the previous year.

The Planning Implementation and Monitoring Team Leader reported that work would be carried out to inform the Town and Parish Councils of the funding opportunity and a briefing would be held with them on how to submit bids.

A non Cabinet member sought that the application process available to towns and parishes be made as simple as possible, to aid the submission of their applications.

Other members spoke in support of the proposed funding becoming available in order to support the local community.

27 CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ANNUAL UPDATE 2023/24

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- (i) Acknowledged activities undertaken and efforts made by NFDC and its partners between 1 January 2023 and 31st March 2024 in response to the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency;
- (ii) Noted that as local leaders of place, NFDC, through its corporate plan, transformation programme and ongoing approaches to service delivery has made a clear commitment to the climate and nature emergency agenda, recognising UK Government's legally binding net zero targets;
- (iii) Supported the ongoing delivery of the approved Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan (Appendix 2), and by continuing to work with partners and the public, the Council will continue to play a key role; and
- (iv) Supported the continuing development of the longer-term Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plan supported by the Members Climate Change and Nature Emergency Task and Finish Group.

KEY DECISION:

Yes.

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 reported he was pleased to present the report on the progress to address the climate change and nature emergency, which the council had declared in 2021. A commitment had been made to publish an annual report providing an update on the progress. The report highlighted the delivery of projects across all council services, with the list of activities growing year on year and how this was being embedded into day-to-day operations. Examples of work included, the new public conveniences at Barton on Sea beach where the design specification had included use of sustainable materials and the retrofitting of 70 council properties using external funding to improve the energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, the energy bills for tenants as well as

improving biodiversity in the community. It was positive to see how these tangible projects made a difference in the community.

The data within the report demonstrated that it was necessary to increase the scale and pace of action significantly in order to meet local and national climate commitments. The new Corporate Plan prioritised climate actions across four areas; carbon reduction, carbon adaption, national recovery and programme management.

The strategic direction of the council would be guided over the next 12 months with a new member Task and Finish Group. The Portfolio Holder reported he was optimistic that the drive to reduce carbon emissions would continue with positive outcomes to support services for residents, businesses and those visiting the forest.

The Climate and Sustainability Manager reported that the timing of the report had been realigned to the financial year and therefore the report included two years worth of carbon emission data. This showed a small decrease in both the council operations data and the wider environment, which was a positive step. The forthcoming Task and Finish Group would help to inform the development of the longer term strategy and action plan.

A Cabinet Member highlighted how the emission data by sector showed that the largest contributor was transport being responsible for 47% of emissions and the public sector was 1%. He felt that it was important to look both inwardly at the council activities and the resulting carbon emissions, but that it was important to look outwardly to try and influence others in reducing their carbon impact.

A number of non Cabinet Members spoke in support of the report and recognised that working with partners was necessary in order to reduce carbon emissions. Engagement work should be carried out in the local community. Clarity was sought in relation to how partnership working with other organisations would be carried out.

28 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - SCENE SETTING

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend to Council that the:

1. revised MTFP forecasts, as outlined within the report and appendices be adopted;
2. options identified to close the budget gap for 2025/26 and through to 2028/29 are developed further;
3. reporting timeline as set out in paragraph 74 be agreed;
4. proposed car parking fees and charges from 1 January 2025 as referenced in paragraph 48 and detailed in appendix 5 are approved;
5. proposed Keyhaven river fees and charges from 1 January 2025, as amended by Cabinet, and as detailed in a revised Appendix 6 for consideration by Full Council, are approved; and

6. decision to enter into an agreement with other Hampshire authorities regarding the pooling of business rates is delegated to the s151 officer in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance & Corporate.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Council.

PORTFOLIO:

Finance and Corporate

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the report, explaining that it covered the period through to 2028/29. It focused both on the medium term, and on the budget for next year and how it could be delivered. Information was awaited on the local Government settlement. The report included baseline assumptions of funding, and the additional funding support streams which might not be received in next financial year. The balancing of the budget was a challenge.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the cumulative deficit detailed in paragraph 34 of the report at that work was being carried out in order to address this year on year. It was necessary to maximise income and prioritise expenditure as well as continuing to deliver quality services to residents. The fees and charges section of the report was highlighted and that the income generated from these would be used to help to deliver council services. He reported that there was a considerable way to go to balance the budget over the length of the financial plan.

The Portfolio Holder proposed an amendment to recommendation no 5, relating to the Keyhaven river fees and that the proposed figures be amended to round them up to make the fees clearer and simpler. It was noted that the amended proposed charges would be presented as part of the report to the next Full Council meeting for approval.

The Assistant Director Finance reported that the report provided an initial view of the Medium Term Financial Plan, explaining the timeline of working towards a balanced budget for 2025/26. A number of assumptions were detailed in paragraph 11, noting the difficulties to plan with only a one-year settlement. An assumption had been made around council tax increase and maintaining a £5 increase each year, in line with pre-referendum government parameters.

Paragraph 20 showed the negative impact likely from the Fair Funding Review forecast for 2027/28 due to the reduced retention of business rates likely to be received and therefore a potential £1.7m budget pressure. It was highlighted that the estimated cumulative budget deficit for 2025/26 was £628k and that this deficit increased to £2.4m in 2028/29. The proposed fees and charges would provide

additional income to the council to help to address the budget deficit and that additional income was expected from commercial investment, as well in the longer term, the benefits expected from the transformation programme. The Council had reserves which could be used for a one off mitigation, if necessary.

The HRA had similar budgetary pressures, including the pay award and inflation. Significant investment was required on the greener housing strategy, safety works for high rise buildings, as well as improving the housing stock to EPC rating of a C.

The Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group had been reviewing the financial plan and an update would be provided to the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November. It was the intention to carry out further work and develop assumptions further in order to deliver a balanced budget in February 2025.

A number of non Cabinet Members spoke in relation the proposed car parking fee increases, particularly in relation to the car parking clocks. Concern was raised in relation to the conflict with priorities in the Corporate Plan to support local businesses in the district, recognising that there were vacant shops in the high streets. It was noted that there was a proposed 12.5% increase to the short stay parking clock and that the previous year had also seen a significant increase. It was also highlighted how the district had poor public transport links making it more difficult to travel without a car, and that lower paid workers would be disadvantaged. It was suggested that the parking clocks be raised in line with inflation rather than the proposed fees within the report.

The Cabinet Members for Finance and Corporate and Environment and Sustainability responded to the points raised. It was felt that the car parking clocks with the proposed increase would still provide excellent value for money for car parking. A short stay clock would cost 86p a week and this could be used across the district. Comparison was made with other neighbouring authorities recognising that the proposed car parking charges were still lower than in other local authority areas. The car parking fee increase would impact those users of the district car parks.

29 UPDATES TO CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommend that Council approve the Contract Standing Orders as set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

KEY DECISION:

Report to Cabinet and Council

PORTFOLIO:

Finance and Corporate

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED/REJECTED:

As set out in the report.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None.

DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the report recognising that there was a need to update the contract standing orders. The report had been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The contract standing orders would continue to be support to local businesses when going out to tender to include at least one local supplier wherever possible.

The Strategic Procurement Manager reported members had noted the report and provided feedback through the scrutiny panel. One member felt that further governance was required over contract modifications to reduce the risk of the contract value rising exponentially. As a result, changes had been made to the report in paragraphs 25 and 26 and in Appendix 2, section 19.5, to set out that if the modification were to result in the total contract value reaching the next threshold, authorisation would be required by the relevant officer, as per the Financial Regulations. Contract modifications were minimal, but when they do occur, they were recorded, justified and authorised, and reported to EMT and members, as appropriate.

A non Cabinet member questioned the fact that a formal risk assessment was deemed not to be required as set out in paragraph 32 of the report and whether there should be some recognition that with the greater amounts involved, the potential risks would increase. The Strategic Procurement Manager reported that a risk register was maintained as part of the developing service plan to assess the risks and controls, however one had not been raised in relation to this specific change. Although the financial limits were being raised, they were in line with that for the signing of contracts.

30 MEETING DATES**RESOLVED:**

The following dates of meetings for 2025/26 (Wednesdays at 10:00am) were agreed:

2025

7 May (already agreed)
4 June
2 July
6 August
3 September
1 October
5 November
3 December

2026

4 February
18 February
4 March
1 April
6 May

CHAIRMAN