

6 NOVEMBER 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 6 November 2024

* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden

* Jeremy Heron

*Present

Councillors:

* Dan Poole

* Derek Tipp

In attendance:

Councillors:

John Adams

Alan Alvey

Peter Armstrong

Steve Clarke

Philip Dowd

Allan Glass

David Hawkins

Councillors:

Alan O'Sullivan

Joe Reilly

Steve Rippon-Swaine

John Sleep

Neil Tungate

Christine Ward

Officers Attending:

Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Richard Knott, Tanya Coulter,
Rebecca Drummond, Joe Tyler, Paul Whittles, Saqib Yasin and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Blunden.

Apologies for absence from Cllr M Wade, a non-Cabinet member.

The Chief Executive sent her apologies.

31 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Last week the Leader had the absolute privilege of attending the re-opening of St George's Hall in Calshot. Led by the Council, the significant, and brilliant partnership and community engagement work involved in delivering the hall's refurbishment and opening ceremony was on show for all to see, with fantastic new facilities such as the expanded kitchen, and cinema room dedicated to a past community figure Dora Tarrant, who did so much for her fellow residents.

The grant funded project and the partnership plans to grow the facility as a hub to meet the needs of the local community was just one example of what the People and Place Corporate Plan priorities would deliver in the coming years.

The Leader was pleased to announce that this month the planning department had commenced two consultations in support of the Local Plan Review. The first consultation related to a revised Statement of Community Involvement, which set out the methods used to consult and involve others in planning matters. The second consultation was a Call for Sites which provided an opportunity for landowners, communities, developers and site promoters to suggest possible land suitable for development, or that could be used for open space or nature recovery. The Corporate Plan emphasised community engagement as a key priority. The Council continued to empower communities to influence services and shape places in the future. Therefore, the Council had contacted a wide variety of organisations, businesses, developers, government bodies, and parish and town councils for both the consultations and looked forward to receiving a range of views and site suggestions in response. The Council would continue to use the responses received to inform the way it engaged local people in planning and to help prepare the emerging evidence base on land that may be potentially suitable and available for future consideration in the Local Plan Review.

The Council were also engaging widely in the early stages of the development of a new Parking Strategy. An initial consultation was now live and the Leader encouraged everyone to take the time to complete the survey by 1 December 2024. There were already some interesting comments online and the Council wanted to hear from residents and businesses, as well as from the town and parish councils and wider partners.

32 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 be confirmed and signed.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

34 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

35 CORPORATE PLAN – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Performance and Insight Manager introduced the item and provided a summary of the report.

Over the Summer the Executive Management Team (EMT) considered the list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), following approval of a suite of performance documents Cabinet earlier in the year. EMT gave specific consideration to the baselines and the targets of the KPIs.

There were several observations made during this process and, following feedback from the relevant service areas, a final list of KPIs and updated targets were now presented for Cabinet approval.

One of the highlighted issues during this process was the formatting of the KPIs, an example being the consistent presentation of survey results. These formatting issues had since been resolved.

Several of the KPI targets, for example tenant satisfaction, Appletree Carline customers and waste and recycling measures, had been updated to reflect the new and challenging target profile. Furthermore, some measures were changed from snapshot to a cumulative so as to clearly reflect their incremental nature.

A non-executive member welcomed the development of the KPIs for 2024-2028 and commented that there must be sufficient balance when it comes to challenge and recognition of areas involving work with strategic partners.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet approved the KPI list 2024-2028.

36 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (BASED ON PERFORMANCE APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2024 INCLUSIVE)

The Assistant Director of Finance introduced the item and provided an overview of the report.

Members were informed that the report was an update on the latest budget forecasts for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and capital programme for the 2024/2025 year, based on the half year performance from April 2024 to September 2024 inclusive.

It was explained that there was some movement in the individual budget forecasts but that the latest position in the general fund remained unchanged from Quarter one with effectively a balanced budget at Portfolio Holder level.

The HRA account forecast deficit had increased by £78,000 to £200,000 and the capital programme had increased by £300,000 subject to the approval of the recommendations in the report.

The approval of a further £75,000 for the refurbishment of the Salisbury Arcade in Totton would support the regeneration of the area by enhancing the overall appearance of the area whilst also linking to two of the Council's adjoining assets. This would be funded via the reallocation of resources from another scheme.

The third recommendation, for a £375,000 supplementary budget for the Hardley Depot scheme, was due for abnormal ground works and approval of this would ensure a modern, fit for purpose Council asset.

The pay award for 2024/2025 had now been concluded and members were reassured that sufficient budget exists to meet the increased in-year pay costs.

New variations to the general fund and HRA included pressures on income streams, totalling £350,000, relating to car parking income and planning fees. This was in spite of an overall increase in parking income and the Council's ability to charge more for planning services following the rise in national set planning fees.

Operational pressures of £90,000 regarding agency staffing and vehicle hire costs affected the Street Scene services. This was due to sickness levels and vacancies,

resulting in more expensive agency costs. The Council's aging fleet also required more repairs and maintenance.

Necessary ICT cloud storage costs were greater than budget and there had been a spike in insurance costs following a sustained period of lower premiums. These pressures affected both the general fund and HRA with £175,000 increase relating to the General Fund and a £78,000 increase relating to the HRA. The £78,000 increase made up the total movements in adverse variances in the HRA and was uncontrollable by the service.

The Council's fuel costs were 15% lower than budget, resulting in a saving of £30,000 in first half of the year. Furthermore, the Council continued to benefit from holding cash balances in a relatively high interest rate environment, which provided an additional £400,000 of interest earnings.

Further mitigation of the General Fund pressures came from vacancies within the Revenue and Benefits and Support and Planning services, totalling £185,000, resulting in a balanced budget forecast for the General Fund.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate commented on the report and highlighted that the £75,000 supplementary budget for the Salisbury Arcade was an excellent, deliverable project and would continue to be improve a capital asset that generated income for the Council whilst enhancing the wider area of Totton.

A briefing on Hardley Depot was provided to all members recently where it was explained that building costs had increased since the start of the project. The Portfolio Holder explained that although the supplementary budget was not desirable it should be considered relative to the overall cost of the project (£7million). The project would deliver a modern, fit for purpose facility and it was acknowledged that the new design would enhance staff safety by preventing the need for large vehicles to reverse on site.

Non-executive members commented on the design of the project and how some of the extra costs were attributed to the gas network. It was explained by the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, S151 and Transformation that delays from the utility providers (gas and water) had added £110,000 of extra costs to the project.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet –

1. Noted the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund, HRA and Capital Fund.
2. Approved the £75,000 supplementary budget for the Salisbury Arcade, Totton scheme funded via a corresponding reduction in the Council's Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) and Milford-on-Sea Public conveniences capital scheme.
3. Recommend that Council approve the £375,000 supplementary budget for the Hardley Depot scheme as a result of abnormal groundworks.

CHAIRMAN