

**7 MAY 2025**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 7 May 2025

\* Cllr Jill Cleary (Chairman)

\* Cllr Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

- \* Geoffrey Blunden
- \* Jeremy Heron

**Councillors:**

- \* Dan Poole
- \* Derek Tipp

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Steve Clarke  
Philip Dowd  
Allan Glass  
David Hawkins

**Councillors:**

Alan O'Sullivan  
Steve Rippon-Swaine  
Malcolm Wade

**Officers Attending:**

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Richard Knott, Tanya Coulter, Joe Tyler, Tim Guymer and Jeannie Satchell.

**Apologies**

There were no apologies from Cabinet members.

Cllr Christine Ward, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, gave her apologies.

**81 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader gave thanks to the waste service as bins continued to be delivered to residents in the Phase 1 area. Around 10,640 properties in Phase 1 had their wheelie bins delivered so far, and a family from New Milton were the first winners in the Council's golden ticket giveaway.

At the end of April, the Council hosted a meeting on local government reorganisation with 24 town and parishes. It was a lively evening with strong views and useful discussions. Going forwards, the Council would work with its local councils to ensure their views on the shape of local government are represented, and that the Council consider how it wants to shape local services and assets.

The Leader referred to her comments recently made on BBC One Politics South, stating that the Council's desire was for the New Forest to sit with two or maybe three other councils who share a common sense of place and work at a local level to deliver services.

The Leader explained that the Council has excellent services, including its housing management services, that it can be truly proud of and that NFDC would be making a significant contribution to the development and performance of any new council.

The Leader was proud to note that 42 new affordable homes were being built for the Council in Fordingbridge as part of a major Strategic Site development. Including 28 homes for rent and 14 shared ownership properties, this significant commitment would contribute towards the Council's corporate plan aim to increase the number of affordable homes and help to create healthy communities. The first of the homes is due to complete this summer and will then be delivered in phases until autumn 2028.

## **82 MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2025 be confirmed and signed.

## **83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **84 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

## **85 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND ALLOCATION FOR 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the item raised the following, main points:

- The Council were pleased to be able to support the PEDALL scheme and assist individuals with disabilities to enjoy outdoor activities through cycling in the New Forest through allocated funding.
- Part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) would also be allocated in grants to micro and small local producers to assist them in developing and growing their business.
- Furthermore, the REPF would provide funding to complement the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocated to the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) Support Programme.

The Assistant Director of Place Development explained that the total fund allocation was £162,000 and that Cabinet were being asked to authorise delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise the programme with draft thresholds, timescales and criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

A non-executive member made comments referring to paragraph 27 of the report, equalities implications, regarding the removal of barriers for disabled people within the District. It was heard that rural communities were more likely to be disadvantaged, as the 2021 Census showed, 16.3% of NFDC residents in rural communities were disabled and 14,000 individuals were economically inactive. The Assistant Director of Place Development explained that the business grants

scheme and community grants scheme were both two channels that Council funding can reach those that are disadvantaged could bid for grants from these schemes.

Another non-executive member raised the matter of Hampshire County Council (HCC) stopping the use of disabled bus services before 9am and how the New Forest Disability Forum had raised this matter. It was asked whether this fund allocation could assist those individuals affected by this change. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Corporate acknowledged how there are challenges facing those members of the District who are disabled and praised the Government for providing this funding and referenced the other funding allocations that could be applied for by communities in the District.

The Leader reminded members that the REPF was solely for capital funding but stated that she would contact the Leader of HCC to discuss the matter of disabled bus passes to ask HCC to reconsider their decision.

**RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet

1. Approved the addition of £162,005 to the Council's Capital Programme for 2025/26, noting the spend is fully financed through Government grant (being the Rural England Prosperity Fund);
2. Approved the proposed allocation of £162,005 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund for the financial year 2025-2026 towards the specific projects set out in this report; and
3. Delegated authority for future decision making associated with the finalisation of the project programme for 25/26 Rural England Prosperity spend to the Strategic Director for Place Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

CHAIRMAN