

7 SEPTEMBER 2020

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 7 September 2020

- * Cllr Allan Glass (Chairman)
- * Cllr Derek Tipp (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Diane Andrews
- * Ann Bellows
- * Sue Bennison
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- * Hilary Brand
- * Alex Brunsdon
- * Fran Carpenter
- Louise Cerasoli
- * Mark Clark
- * Rebecca Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Anne Corbridge
- * Keith Craze
- * Kate Crisell
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * Arthur Davis
- * Sandra Delemare
- * Philip Dowd
- * Jan Duke
- * Barry Dunning
- * Jacqui England
- * Andrew Gossage
- * Michael Harris
- * David Harrison
- * David Hawkins
- Edward Heron

Councillors:

- * Jeremy Heron
- * Alison Hoare
- * Maureen Holding
- * Christine Hopkins
- * Mahmoud Kangarani
- * Joshua Kidd
- * Emma Lane
- Martyn Levitt
- * Alexis McEvoy
- * Ian Murray
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Neville Penman
- * Caroline Rackham
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Barry Rickman
- * Tony Ring
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * David Russell
- * Ann Sevier
- * Mark Steele
- * Michael Thierry
- * Beverley Thorne
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * John Ward

*Present

Officers Attending:

Bob Jackson, Grainne O'Rourke, Colin Read, Daniel Reynafarje, Andy Rogers, Manjit Sandhu, Claire Upton-Brown, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cerasoli, E Heron and Levitt.

85 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020, be confirmed.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests, or any other interests by Members.

87 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Former Councillor Christine Ford**

At the Cabinet meeting on 5 August 2020, the Leader of the Council announced with great sadness, that former New Forest District Councillor Christine Ford had sadly passed away on 1 August 2020.

As the first Full Council meeting following this date, the Chairman paid tribute to Christine, who had a long and distinguished record of service to the community and was a very much liked and respected Member of the Council. She would be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Due to current restrictions, the funeral arrangements were private and by invitation. However, it was hoped that a memorial service may take place in the New Year.

Merchant Navy Day

The Chairman reported that, to mark Merchant Navy Day, he was accompanied by his wife, Christine, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to fly the Red Ensign at Appletree Court on 3 September 2020.

88 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**COVID-19**

The Leader of the Council highlighted that the pandemic had impacted on everyone's lives over the last six months. Local organisations including the Council had needed to adapt to be able to respond.

The recent work of the Council's Recovery Task and Finish Groups highlighted the huge amount of work taking place across the community. It was noted that the Council and local partners had responded to the closure of the New Forest campsites at short notice, with the Showground alone welcoming 38,000 visitors to 200 pitches. This had helped protect both the New Forest from the damage of wild camping and provided much needed help for many local businesses.

The Leader reported on the recent positive response to a Covid incident at one of the Council's Health and Leisure Centres, which was rapidly identified and successfully managed, minimising the impact on customers and the centre. Public Health England were satisfied that the Council had embedded proper arrangements for social distancing and avoiding individual contacts. Therefore, the Council was able to continue operating.

Return to Appletree Court

The Leader confirmed that more officers would begin returning to Appletree Court offices in October, to work safely. The number working daily would be between 100 and 150, less than 50% of normal staffing numbers in the building.

In respect of Elected Members, it was reported that the Council continued to monitor Government guidance and at present, Virtual Meetings remained the safest way to continue with the business of the Council. Alternative arrangements such as Hybrid Meetings had been considered but presented significant operational and accessibility challenges, in addition to requiring further investment. The Leader highlighted the success of the Council's Virtual Meetings, although not without their challenges, they had attracted 3,614 views across all the Council, Cabinet, Committee and Panel meetings since May 2020. In the meantime, plans were underway in conjunction with the return of more officers to Appletree Court, to provide phased return options for Elected Members.

Milford on Sea – Sea Wall

The Leader highlighted that the Council was very busy with normal business alongside that of responding to COVID-19. The storm damage at Milford that occurred at the start of the year would shortly have some emergency works carried out to provide winter protection both to Council assets and those of residents. The progress of the Council's applications for funding to the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (Levy Funding) was encouraging and further information was expected no later than November 2020.

89 REPORTS OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council presented the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 5 August and 2 September 2020 and moved the adoption of the recommendations.

Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

Item 2 (2 September 2020) – Emergency Budget 2020/21 and Updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2023/24

Cllr Harrison, in highlighting his view on the use of Reserves at a time of crisis, moved the following amendment on this item:-

“To amend the budget to use £1 million from the General Reserve Fund, to be made available for any additional expenditure.”

Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr J Heron, responded to the amendment. He highlighted that the full use of £3 million reserves remained available for any future uncertainties the Council faced. This was the primary purpose of holding such reserves. Having fully funded this year's budget, he did not consider the insertion of further reserves into the budget itself to be appropriate when these funds could serve the Council well in the future.

Cllrs J Davies and Rackham spoke in support of the amendment and hoped that some of the £1 million in reserves could be utilised in delivering some of the proposed outcomes from the COVID-19 Recovery work.

Some Members spoke in support of the original motion and the budget as presented to the Council, having participated in the work of the COVID-19 Recovery – Finance and Resources Task and Finish Group.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, Cllr Harrison suggested that it afforded the opportunity to respond more quickly to new budget requirements.

The Leader of the Council encouraged Members to support the original motion, highlighting the hard work of all Portfolio Holders, Task and Finish Group Members and officers to bring forward a balanced budget in significantly challenging circumstances.

The amendment was put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for: Cllrs Brunsdon, M Clark, J Davies, Harrison, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade and M Wade.

Voting against: Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Bellows, Bennison, Blunden, Carpenter, Clarke, Cleary, Corbridge, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Davis, Duke, Dunning, England, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, J Heron, Hoare, Holding, Kidd, Lane, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Steele, Thierry, Thorne, Tipp, Tungate, C Ward and J Ward.

Abstaining: Cllrs R Clark, Dowd and Kangarani.

The amendment was lost, 8 in favour, 41 against, 3 abstentions.

Item 5 (2 September 2020) – Vision for the Waterside

The Chairman highlighted his support in bringing forward a collective vision for the Waterside. Members spoke in support of the work of the Special Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which had influenced in a number of areas in the final vision document.

Some Members expressed their wish to see a more rounded vision, engaging directly with local communities.

The Chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Cllr Rippon-Swaine, reported briefly on the work at the Special Panel meeting on this matter. He highlighted the engagement of local towns and parishes alongside ward councillors. As an overarching document, more detailed reports on specific subject matters such as those raised by councillors would be brought forward in due course.

Item 6 (2 September 2020) – Electoral Review of New Forest District Council – Draft Recommendations – Consultation Response

Cllr Corbridge moved an amendment on this item, a copy of which was circulated to the Council in advance of the meeting. The amendment concerned the ward boundaries in Lymington and Pennington as part of the Council's consultation response to the Local Government Boundary Commission. A copy is attached to these minutes.

Cllr Dunning seconded the amendment.

Differing views were expressed on the area currently identified as the Buckland ward, as to whether it should be included in a warding pattern with Lymington, Pennington or other neighbouring areas.

Members speaking in support of the amendment highlighted the use of the majority of the linear geographical feature of the A337, as a clearly defined boundary between the proposed Pennington and Lymington wards. It was noted that some local concerns relating to the Belmore Estate had been addressed as part of the amendment.

The Leader of the Council in responding to the amendment, confirmed that he would be happy to support it, in recognition of the work undertaken by local Members to find the best solution for Lymington and Pennington, in the context of the overall District wide scheme.

The amendment was put to the vote and carried.

Cllr M Wade moved an amendment on this item, a copy of which was circulated to the Council in advance of the meeting. The amendment concerned the ward boundaries in Hythe and Dibden as part of the Council's consultation response to the Local Government Boundary Commission. A copy is attached to these minutes.

Cllr Dowd seconded the amendment.

Members spoke in support of the amendment, and placed on record their thanks to officers for the technical support required to produce the amendment.

The Leader of the Council in responding to the amendment, again confirmed that he would be happy to support it for the same reasons as the Lymington and Pennington amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote and carried.

Cllr Rackham wished for her dissent to be recorded in respect of the inclusion of Eling in a ward with Marchwood rather than with Totton.

Cllr Duke placed on record her thanks to Boldre Parish Council, alongside officers, for their hard work to produce a solution that did not split Boldre Parish across District wards.

The substantive motion of the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 5 August and 2 September 2020 was put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for: Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Bellows, Bennison, Blunden, Brunson, Carpenter, M Clark, R Clark, Clarke, Cleary, Corbridge, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Davis, Delemare, Dowd, Duke, Dunning, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, J Heron, Hoare, Holding, Hopkins, Kidd, Lane, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reid, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Steele, Thierry, Thorne, Tipp, Tungate, A Wade, M Wade, C Ward and J Ward.

Voting against: None.

Abstaining: Cllrs England, Harrison, Kangarani, Osborne and Rackham.

The motion, as amended, was carried. 49 in favour, none against, 5 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be received and the recommendations as amended, be adopted.

90 REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Cllr Rippon-Swaine presented the report of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 12 March 2020, and moved the adoption of the recommendations, including a revised motion on the Waterside Rail Link.

Cllr Bennison seconded the motion.

Cllr Harrison, as the mover of the original motion before being considered by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, spoke in support of the Panel's consideration, in recognition of the good debate and was delighted with the motion which reinforced the joined up approach on this issue from local public sector organisations.

Other Members spoke in support of the motion, citing enhancements to public transport as a key priority for the Council.

RESOLVED:

That this Council supports the principle of rail transport, and therefore supports the Hampshire County Council bid for the funding of a feasibility study into the resumption of a rail link along the Waterside as part of a strategic transport infrastructure in the light of planned development in the south waterside area. Officers will be tasked to work closely with HCC staff to ensure oversight on planning issues and economic and environmental viability are maintained and resolved.

91 QUESTIONS

There were none.

92 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22A as follows:-

- Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Jill Cleary, on neighbour disputes during lockdown.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, Cllr E Heron, on changes to the planning system.
- Cllr Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on commercial property investment.
- Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs, Cllr Andrews, on community grants.
- Cllr Kangarani to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on Appletree Court and home working.
- Cllr M Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on virtual meetings.
- Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs, Cllr Andrews, on the future of customer services.

- Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, Cllr E Heron, on the Vision for the Waterside.
- Cllr Brand to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Cllr Harris, on New Forest campsites.
- Cllr Bennison to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Cllr Cleary, on the mother and baby unit in New Milton.
- Cllr Dowd to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services, Cllr Hoare, on flood defences.
- Cllr McEvoy to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Cllr Harris, on Discretionary Grant Fund monies.
- Cllr M Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rickman, on 'no deal' Brexit lorry parks.

Note – a copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

93 DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS - MILFORD-ON-SEA, WESTOVER - SEA WALL FAILURE AND URGENT WORKS

The Chairman moved the adoption of the recommendation as set out on the agenda, in connection with Milford-On-Sea, Westover – Sea Wall Failure and Urgent Works.

Cllr Tipp seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the decision taken by the Section 151 Officer as set out in the decision notice and background report, be noted.

94 DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS

The Chairman moved the adoption of the recommendations as set out on the agenda sheet, to update the Council's Delegation of Powers to Officers to take into account new legislation and changes to staffing structures.

Cllr Tipp seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the changes to the Council's Delegation of Powers to Officers in Annex 1 – Delegation of Powers to Officers – New Powers and Annex 2 – Delegation of Powers to Officers – Changes to Existing Powers, be approved.

95 MEETING DATES FOR THE 2021/22 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED:

That meetings be held on the following Mondays at 6.30pm:-

- 17 May 2021 (Annual meeting, already agreed)
- 12 July 2021
- 6 September 2021
- 11 October 2021

- 6 December 2021
- 21 February 2022
- 11 April 2022
- 16 May 2022 (Annual Meeting)

96 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN