

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 6 October 2021)

1. CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024 'COMMUNITY MATTERS' (MINUTE NO 26)

The Cabinet, having considered the comments of the Council's four Overview and Scrutiny Panels, has endorsed revisions to the corporate plan, following changes in portfolio responsibilities and taking into account the impact of Covid-19 on priorities.

Having approved the Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2024 in March 2020, it has been necessary to reflect the new strategic priorities of each portfolio. Whilst the exercise had been intended as relatively light touch, the Cabinet is pleased to have brought forward a number of new priorities, particularly in respect of sustainability.

The Plan can be viewed in full at Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report 4 of the Cabinet Agenda.

Following Cabinet's endorsement, the Council is now recommended to adopt the revised Corporate Plan.

RECOMMENDED:

That the revised Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Community Matters', be adopted.

2. CONTROL OF ASBESTOS POLICY AND CONTROL OF CONTRACTORS POLICY (MINUTE NO 27)

The Cabinet, having considered the comments of the Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, is recommending the adoption of two new policies to the Council.

The salient points of each policy are as follows:-

Control of Asbestos Policy (Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report 5 of the Cabinet Agenda)

- (a) Statement of intent providing a framework of principle policies which will direct all other council policies, procedures and decisions concerning the management of asbestos;
- (b) Clearly identifies legislative and regulatory duties;
- (c) Clear definition of roles and responsibilities;
- (d) Creation of an Asbestos Working Group incorporating key officers to monitor, review and support those responsible managers effectively manage the risks related to asbestos.

Control of Contractors Policy (Appendix 2 of Cabinet Report 5 of the Cabinet Agenda)

- (a) Clearly identifies legislative and regulatory duties;
- (b) Clear definition of roles and responsibilities;
- (c) Procurement of contractors for construction activities and appointment of relevant CDM duty holders;
- (d) Contractor incident notification protocol;
- (e) Creation of a CDM Working Group incorporating key officers to monitor, review and support those responsible managers effectively manage the risks related to construction work activities.

The policies set a sound basis to ensure that the Council deals appropriately with its duties relating to asbestos and also ensures a coordinated approach to managing asbestos across both Housing and Corporate buildings.

The safety of residents, staff and contractors is of paramount importance to the Council and it is therefore essential that these policies and procedures are maintained, reviewed and updated when it comes to dealing with materials that are potentially hazardous to health.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Control of Asbestos Policy (Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report 5) and Control of Contractors Policy (Appendix 2 of Cabinet Report 5), be adopted.

3. ICT OPERATIONS SYSTEM (MINUTE NO 28)

The Cabinet, following consideration by the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel, approved the funding for improvements to the ICT systems supporting the Council's Operational Services.

The estimated capital costs to implement the system(s) is £237,000 (2021/22 and 2022/23). This will be funded from the existing ICT strategy utilising funds identified within the 'Better digital services for residents and business' facet.

In line with the Council's ICT strategy, continuous investment in back-office systems is essential to ensure front line services continue to deliver. The introduction of a modern workflow management system will improve responses, resource utilisation and service levels to customers.

Investment in ICT has played a significant role in ensuring that the Council remains contactable and continues to deliver services to residents throughout the pandemic. Continuing to invest in technology enables the Council to improve both services and the customer experience efficiently and, very importantly, in a cost effective way.

4. JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (MINUTE NO 29)

The Cabinet, following consideration by the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel, approved the Project Integra Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and is also recommending the adoption of the strategy to Council.

Project Integra is a waste partnership, comprising all 11 Waste Collection Authorities, two unitary authorities and Hampshire County Council, who have responsibility for the disposal of waste collected by the Council. The partnership has an existing JMWMS, but it has not been revised since 2012. It is therefore overdue a review, and needs to be fit for the future of waste management in Hampshire.

The Cabinet would like to emphasise the importance of the strategy for the whole of the New Forest, ahead of future consideration of the Council's own Waste Strategy. Waste continues to be a significant cost across the nation and in Hampshire as a county, and improvements to the disposal process will bring about positive environmental and economic change.

The practical actions arising from the work in respect of the JMWMS are very much in alignment with the recommendation later in this report to declare a climate change and nature emergency.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Project Integra Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report 7 of the Cabinet Agenda), be adopted.

5. CEMETERIES REGULATIONS REVIEW (MINUTE NO 30)

The Cabinet, having considered the recommendations of the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel is recommending the adoption of revised Cemeteries Regulations to Council.

The New Forest District Council's current Cemetery Regulations were last revised in April 2017 and are subsequently due a five-year revision (April 2022).

The Cemeteries Regulations provide regulation and standards for the management and administration of the Council's cemeteries. They inform and provide guidance to all who have an active interest within the cemeteries. The Regulations also establish rules and codes of conduct in line with statutory burial law. The Regulations support the Cemeteries Service with all its operational responsibilities. The Cabinet would like to highlight the importance of the document in the context of those residents who are in a very challenging time in their lives when engaging with this service.

The 2021 regulations will be reviewed within five years of adoption.

RECOMMENDED:

That the revised Cemeteries Regulations (Appendix 1 of Cabinet Report 8 of the Cabinet Agenda) be approved, in order to fulfil the obligations of the New Forest District Council with regard to the 1977 Cemeteries Order.

6. RESPONSE TO MOTION TO DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY (MINUTE NO 31)

The Cabinet, having considered the motion referred to it by the Council at its meeting of 6 September 2021, is reporting to Council in accordance with Standing Orders.

The original motion, proposed by Cllr M Wade and seconded by Cllr Osborne, sought the declaration of a 'climate emergency'. The motion can be read in full as part of the Council agenda and minutes of 6 September 2021 and also within Cabinet Report 9 of the Cabinet Agenda.

The Cabinet is recommending that the Council declares a climate change and nature emergency. Furthermore, the Cabinet has resolved to bring a report to the February 2022 Cabinet meeting on the proposed action plan to deal with the emergency, and the role the Council will play in reducing carbon emissions.

The Cabinet consider that since the matter was last considered, there has been considerable change at a local, national and worldwide level. The pandemic has seen the positive impact changes in behaviour has had on the environment. The Agricultural Act and the forthcoming Environment Bill has, and will, set out future land use policy. These changes are referenced and reflected in the revised Corporate Plan with sustainability and the protection of the District's natural resources, as well as support for the local economy runs through the plan.

It should be noted that whilst Climate Change, Green, Environmental and Sustainability are labels that are often used interchangeably, they are different. Environmental or sustainability considerations are wider than climate change alone. It is important in declaring a Climate Change and Nature Emergency that the Council does not focus

exclusively on climate change and instead seeks to promote actions which enhance wider environmental considerations.

At the Cabinet meeting, the Cabinet heard from a number of Members for and against the proposal, including Cllrs Dowd and Osborne on behalf of Cllr M Wade who had moved the original motion. Cllr Dowd highlighted the Council was the caretaker of an environmentally sensitive area in the New Forest and therefore should show leadership by examining everything the Council does having regard to climate change. He drew attention to the IPCC report and suggested the evidence was beyond compelling that serious action should be taken now.

The Cabinet acknowledge those Members expressing concern in declaring an emergency, with the need to ensure the Council's sound financial management continues against the backdrop of very challenging targets and expectations such as making the New Forest District carbon neutral by 2030 or 2050.

The Cabinet reiterate that in itself, declaring a climate emergency does nothing, and the Council must continue and enhance its strong track record in its sustainability and environmental stewardship. However, by declaring a Climate Change and Nature Emergency, the Council gives a clear signal that it considers it of such importance to take a more fundamental look at its activities, with the target of reducing carbon emissions along with an ambitious action plan being put in place to measure annual district wide progress.

The Council cannot do this alone, and it must continue to work with other local authorities and partners to tackle the impact of climate change in the area.

The Cabinet will now look forward to considering a report in February 2022 on the proposed action plan.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council declares a Climate Change and Nature Emergency.

**COUNCILLOR E HERON
CHAIRMAN**