

21 MARCH 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 21 March 2022.

* Cllr Derek Tipp (Chairman)

* Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

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

Councillors:

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

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Grainne O'Rourke, Claire Upton-Brown and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Brunsdon, Clarke, Corbridge, S Davies, Dowd, Duke, Dunning, Gossage, Lane, Rippon-Swaine and C Ward.

73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

The Leader of the Council declared, for transparency purposes, his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd. He confirmed that he would not take part in the debate or vote in the report of the Cabinet, considered at minute 76 below.

Cllr A Wade declared, for transparency purposes, that his wife was employed by Carnival UK who utilised Southampton Port. He concluded that there were no common law issues of bias or pretermination to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak and to vote on the report of the Cabinet, considered at minute 76 below.

74 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Ukraine**

The Chairman recorded the Council's strength and solidarity with the people of Ukraine in what had been the most challenging of times for the country following the recent invasion. It was noted that the Council had been flying the flag of Ukraine at its Appletree Court offices for a number of weeks now.

New Councillor

The Chairman welcomed new Cllr Sean Cullen to his first Full Council meeting following his recent election.

Engagements

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:-

Thursday 24 February 2022

Attended the Civic Afternoon of the Mayor of Fareham.

Wednesday 9 March 2022

Attended the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth's Civic Head Dinner.

Friday 18 March 2022

Attended the Mayor of Fareham' Charity Ball at the HMS Collingwood, Fareham.

Saturday 5 March 2022

The Vice-Chairman attended the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane's Spring Charity Concert at the Anvil, Basingstoke.

Sunday 20 March 2022

The Vice-Chairman attended the Annual Civic Service of the New Milton Town Mayor.

75 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council wished to associate himself with the comments of the Chairman with regard to the crisis in Ukraine. Further guidance from Government was expected shortly on the role the Council could play to support refugees.

76 REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council declared, for transparency purposes, his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd. He confirmed that he would not take part in the debate or vote in this item.

Cllr A Wade declared, for transparency purposes, that his wife was employed by Carnival UK who utilised Southampton Port. He concluded that there were no common law issues of bias or pretermination to prevent him from remaining in the meeting to speak and to vote on this item.

Cllr Cleary presented the report of the Special Cabinet meeting held on 21 March 2022, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr J Heron seconded the motion.

Members debated the Solent Freeport proposals.

Speaking against the recommendations, Members cited concerns over the job creation statistics, including the risk of displacement and jobs being moved around the District. The protection of workers rights was highlighted as being of crucial importance given the recent press coverage of DP World. The international element of the Solent Freeport concerned some Members who wished to focus on the benefits of delivery for the New Forest area. The impact on development and planning implications were highlighted, particularly on the Waterside area.

Speaking for the recommendations, Members referred to the opportunity for funding to support necessary infrastructure on the Waterside, which could be crucial if development takes place through the planning process, regardless of any final approvals for the Freeport. The Council would remain the local planning authority with control of planning policy, regardless of Freeport status of the Solent area. The opportunity to remain part of the process and to continue to influence the future direction was put forward as a risk of not participating in the initiative.

A number of Members on all sides of the debate recognised the importance of protecting the special nature of the New Forest and to remain diligent and hold the delivery of the benefits of the Solent Freeport to account.

Cllr Cleary responded to the debate and forecast that the Solent Freeport would bring new jobs, many of which would be skilled. Training for local people would be accessible. With or without the Freeport, it was noted that development on allocated sites within the Local Plan would take place. However, without the Freeport, the lost training opportunities and commitment to net zero initiatives would put the Council at risk of losing funding opportunities. Members were reassured that, following recent press coverage, DP World did not own any land in the New Forest and that workers rights would be protected by UK law. Members were encouraged to focus on the local benefits and opportunities including apprenticeships, work placements and training.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

Note – Cllrs E Heron and Rackham requested that their abstention from the resolution above, be recorded.

CHAIRMAN