

12 DECEMBER 2022

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 12 December 2022.

* Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (Chairman)

* Cllr Neville Penman (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
* Caroline Rackham
* Alvin Reid
Joe Reilly
* Barry Rickman
* Tony Ring
Steve Rippon-Swaine
* David Russell
* Ann Sevier
* Michael Thierry
Beverley Thorne
* Derek Tipp
Neil Tungate
* Alex Wade
* Malcolm Wade
* Christine Ward
John Ward

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Grainne O'Rourke and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Alvey, Craze, Crisell, Duke, England, Glass, Lane, Reilly, Rippon-Swaine, Thorne, Tungate and J Ward.

46 MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022, be confirmed.

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Cllr E Heron, for transparency purposes, declared his membership of the Solent Freeport Consortium Ltd. He confirmed that he would abstain from voting on this part of the Cabinet report, considered at minute 50 below.

48 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Engagements**

The Chairman informed Members of recent engagements attended, including:-

15 November

The Chairman was invited to the 60th Anniversary and AGM of Solent Mind at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton. This AGM gave the opportunity to chat with partners, funders and friends and explore how they would work together to better support people with mental health conditions.

Maggie MacIlsac, CEO of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board spoke about the challenges faced today and John Wilderspin, Chair of the Board spoke about changes since Solent Mind was founded 60 years ago.

16 November

The Chairman accompanied the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq, as they unveiled a mural in New Milton, created by Members of MENCAP.

1 December

The Chairman attended the New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards at Brockenhurst College on 1 December, attended by 230 businesses. The event showcased all of the 9000 businesses within the New Forest area, demonstrating the value to the public and private sector of thriving business.

Christmas Carols

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman attended carol services in New Milton and Basingstoke on 3 and 10 December respectively.

War Memorial Hospital – Hythe

The Chairman referred to his planned attendance at the opening ceremony of a new hospital building, together with a tour of the new facilities of the War Memorial Hospital in Hythe. Unfortunately this engagement was cancelled but would be

rearranged. The Chairman looked forward to viewing these facilities in the New Year.

49 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Solent Freeport

The Leader referred to a key event she attended marking the Government's approval of the Solent Freeport. The event started in Southampton and came across the water to the Solent Gateway site at Marchwood. A copy of the letter from the Minister for Levelling Up confirming the approval is attached to these minutes.

The Leader welcomed the opportunity to hear first hand the Government's commitment to backing Freeports as a key part of its economic strategy. She referred to the significant work with partners across the private and public sector to achieve this important step and that the Council would continue its efforts to see the potential benefits delivered into real opportunities for New Forest residents.

50 REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2022 and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

Paragraph 4 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2022 Onwards

One Member questioned, having adopted the Asset Investment Strategy, how the Council would use the revenue from assets achieved through the strategy. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services highlighted that the revenue would enter the Council's general fund, and the general fund priorities were outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), demonstrating the use of this additional income. The Council awaited the provisional local government finance settlement to understand further impact to the MTFP.

Paragraph 7 – Solent Freeport HM Government Memorandum of Understanding

Note – Cllr E Heron requested that his abstention from the above, be recorded.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

51 QUESTIONS

There were none.

52 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

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

- Cllr Thierry to the Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism and High Streets, Cllr Michael Harris OBE on initiatives to support local high streets.

- Cllr Kangarani to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, Cllr Andrews on housing targets in the New Forest.
- Cllr Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary on the impact of the Freeport on Dibden Bay.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr J Heron on grant funding for warm banks.
- Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr S Davies on reducing the District's carbon footprint.
- Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services, Cllr E Heron on current housing waiting lists and temporary accommodation.

Note:-

A copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

53 APPOINTMENT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PLACE, OPERATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Leader of the Council moved the recommendations as set out in the report. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

A number of Members spoke in support of the appointment. It was considered that an excellent candidate had been found who would add great value to the District Council. In doing so, Members recorded thanks to the Council officers who held the positions in the report that would be made redundant, for all their hard work in serving the residents of the New Forest. It should be noted that the Council would be working closely with both individuals to ensure that HR procedures, including if appropriate redeployment, were followed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council approves the appointment of James Carpenter as Strategic Director – Place, Operations and Sustainability of New Forest District Council.
2. That the Council approves the dismissal on grounds of redundancy of the postholders: Executive Head – Partnerships and Operations, and Executive Head – Planning Regeneration and Economy.

54 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Dehenna Davison MP
Minister for Levelling Up
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Brian Johnson
Chair, Solent Freeport
Solent LEP
C/O Paris Smith
1 London Road
Southampton
SO15 2AE

7th December 2022

Dear Brian,

Freeports: Solent receives final government approval

I am delighted to inform you that Solent is one of the first UK Freeports to get fully up-and-running after receiving final government approval. It is a testament to the strong local partnerships and determined collaboration across the private and public sectors in Solent that they have reached this incredible milestone.

As you know, Freeports are a cornerstone of the government's plan to Level Up the country. This significant landmark is an important step on the Freeports journey and sends a clear message: the UK Government is backing these places as a key part of its economic strategy. Solent Freeport will now receive £25 million of seed funding and potentially hundreds of millions in locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside a generous package of trade and innovation support for businesses locating there.

This will allow Solent to grow its vast maritime economy, making the Solent a thriving hub for the world's marine and maritime sector. This will enable a package of investments at the Port of Southampton to enhance operational efficiency and capacity and a new 500,000 sq. ft of business space at Navigator Quarter, which will benefit from excellent air, road, sea and rail connectivity.

And this is only the beginning of the journey – we will now work closely your Freeport to ensure it has the support it needs from Government to deliver transformational benefits for the local area. We continue to deliver the wider programme at pace, and we expect to announce that the remaining English Freeports have received final approvals in the coming months. We will also shortly be announcing the locations of two Green Freeports in Scotland, as well as at least one Freeport in Wales. Finally, we continue to hold discussions with stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how we can extend the benefits associated with the Freeport programme there.

Freeports will bring opportunity and prosperity to the communities that need it most. We want to raise awareness of these benefits, at home and globally, and challenge some common

misperceptions about Freeports. If you would like to be involved and support your Freeport and the wider Freeport programme, please get in touch with my office.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dehenna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DEHENNA DAVISON MP

FULL COUNCIL – 12 DECEMBER 2022 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Michael Thierry to the Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism and High Streets, Cllr Michael Harris OBE

Will Councillor Michael Harris OBE, New Forest District Council Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism and High Streets update the Council on the success of the recent initiatives to encourage greater spending in local high streets?

Can he outline, going forward, what will be the programme to encourage continued local shop support in the coming months?

Answer:

There have been a series of recent initiatives designed to encourage greater spend in the local high streets, which include the following:-

A joint marketing campaign run throughout 2022 via Go New Forest website promoting local high street shopping. This will be repeated in 2023.

The Council ran the successful 2022 Shop Doctor programme which supported 82 high street businesses, providing participating businesses with impartial feedback. This helped to raise standards and improve the customer experience, increase foot-fall and the spend in town and village centres.

For the first time this year we ran a campaign throughout November to promote shopping in local high streets in support of the national campaign called Small Business Saturday, held on the 3rd December. This was supported with free parking in all NFDC high street car parks. There was extensive promotion across all Council channels to raise awareness of the importance of supporting local high streets. This included pictures of myself and the Chairman supporting local businesses. I was also interviewed by BBC Radio Solent on the importance of our high streets.

Given the success of the Shop Doctor Programme, this initiative will be run again in 2023. 80 high street businesses across 5 New Forest towns and villages will be able to benefit from this.

To better understand how we can support our high streets going forward we have commissioned a retail consultant to undertake visitor experience surveys of the high streets in Totton and Fordingbridge. This will provide valuable information to inform future initiatives.

It is also important to note that the different teams throughout the Council support our local high streets, by keeping them clean and well maintained and ensure that businesses meet relevant safety standards, this all helps to encourage residents and visitors to shop locally.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on visiting Ringwood to meet with local councillors to discuss these initiatives, the Portfolio Holder was pleased to accept the invitation.

Question 2

From Cllr Mahmoud Kangarani to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, Cllr Diane Andrews

Now that the government have been forced to climb down from imposing compulsory housing targets on local authorities, what difference will it make here in the New Forest?

Answer:

The Government has indicated that it will consult on proposed changes to the methodology for calculating housing need over the next few weeks, it is suggested that the consultation will be published before Christmas. The consultation will be in the form of revised wording to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council will consider the consultation once published and respond accordingly. At this stage there is very little else I can say.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the possible relaxation of meeting planning targets as part of the Planning Committee process, the Portfolio Holder reiterated that there was very little else to say until the details of the consultation were made available.

Question 3

From Cllr David Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Britain is one of the most depleted nature countries in the world. What are the Conservatives up to, designating Dibden Bay as a Freeport?

Answer:

The designation of the land at Dibden Bay as a tax site within the Solent Freeport does not change or impact on the environmental designation of this land. The tax incentives through Freeport designation can only be realised if there is something there. As has been discussed a number of times, any development on this site will need planning permission either from the District Council or the Secretary of State depending on the scale of the development. As and when there is a proposal, the impact of the development on the environment will be fully assessed. Designation as a tax site within the Freeport in no way changes or impacts on this process.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on Freeport status being an enabling measure for development, the Leader reiterated that as and when there was a proposal, the impact of the development on the environment would be fully assessed.

Question 4

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services, Cllr Jeremy Heron

Many people across our district are struggling with the increased cost of living, especially high energy bills. Can the portfolio holder tell me how much of the grant funding for warm banks has been allocated so far and which areas have received that money?

Answer:

Before answering, the Portfolio Holder reminded all councillors and residents of the information available on the Council's website regarding cost of living – at <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/costofliving>

So far, we have awarded 16 grant payments, totalling £13,220, to a range of organisations who have opened up a warm space, covering the whole district, including:-

- Totton Spiritualist Church – Totton
- Lyndhurst Community Association – Lyndhurst
- Our Lady of Sorrows – Fordingbridge
- Fawley Parish Council – Fawley
- Hordle Community Association – Hordle
- Sway – Sway
- Avonway Community Centre – Fordingbridge
- Blackfield Baptist Church – Blackfield
- Whitsbury Village Hall – Whitsbury
- St Winfrids Church – Testwood
- St Andrews Church – Hythe and Dibden
- Milford On Sea Community Centre – Milford On Sea
- Burley Parish Council – Burley
- Martin Club – Martin
- Youth and Families Matter – Totton
- Copythorne Parish Hall – Copythorne

These however provide more opportunities than just a warm space, bringing communities together. I would encourage all Members to signpost residents to these facilities where necessary.

In addition, there are more than those listed with funding from the District Council active across the area.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the outstanding funds being allocated to developing a Deprivation Strategy, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the need to be able to adapt and react to changing circumstances in committing finances, as has been required over the last few years.

Question 5

From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr Steve Davies

What has the District Council done, or will be doing, to encourage and facilitate residents to reduce their carbon footprint?

Answer:

The Council is doing positive work across various services to ensure that residents in the District can access information and advice about ways of making their properties more energy efficient reducing carbon footprint. The Council's housing department has also run a cost of living campaign on how to save energy and the planning department offers advice across social media on EV Solar Panels. Through our place shaping role the Council has, and will continue to ensure that we shape our communities in a way that reduces residents' carbon footprint, building homes and employment within existing settlements with easy access to facilities supported by good walking and cycling routes.

The current Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan is being updated and I am looking forward to sharing with you a number of exciting initiatives when we report to Cabinet in February with the annual review.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the collective effort needed to reduce carbon footprint, the Portfolio Holder agreed that residents, businesses and the Council would need to work together on these initiatives.

Question 6

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services, Cllr Edward Heron

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm how many residents and families we have registered as Homeless, on the Housing waiting list and in temporary accommodation? Also, can the Portfolio Holder advise on how many of these families in temporary accommodation have raised concerns about the lack of suitability to their needs?

Answer:

Referring to the November Cabinet report on Homelessness, Members will be aware of the current demands for social housing and homelessness services in the district has been considerable. There are currently 1,566 applicant households on the Housing Register. 576 of these applicants are single people. In more recent times there are, on average, approximately 400 houses made available in the Council area each year, as a mixture of Council and registered provider housing.

There are 397 households whom the Council owes a duty of care to secure accommodation. These households will largely live in one of our stock of Private Sector Lease (PSL) properties or the Council's own stock of properties used for temporary accommodation, until such time as they secure permanent accommodation. Half of these duties have been awarded in the last 18 months.

There are 38 households in emergency accommodation not owned by the Council, which is largely a mix of HMO or flat accommodation, with a further 7 families and 23 single people in hotel accommodation. 25 of these households have a firm offer of accommodation, either through the housing register or through private sector leasing.

Of those currently living in Emergency or Temporary Accommodation, the Council's Reviewing Officer has upheld 3 household's requests for a review of the suitability of their accommodation, whilst 2 reviews are pending.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on a review of the suitability of existing temporary and short term accommodation, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the importance of bringing any individual cases to his attention. Regarding the wider implications of the question, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the changing nature of demand in temporary accommodation towards an increase in families, to which the Council was responding. He concluded by encouraging Members to contact the Council's Homelessness team with any concerns they may have within their communities over the Christmas period and beyond.