

## NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 23 JUNE 2008 AT 10.00AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, NORDON, SALISBURY ROAD, BLANDFORD FORUM

**Present:**

Councillor Peter Webb	Leader – Building Corporate Capacity (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Roake	Environment + Learning and Knowledge Member (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Graham Carr-Jones	Access and Affordable Housing Member
Councillor Deborah Croney	Economy Member

**Apologies:** Councillor Richard Moyle

**Also Present:** Councillor Michael Oliver  
Councillor David Milsted  
Councillor Geoffrey Miller  
Councillor Ian Stewart

#### 152. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ian Stewart declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Gillingham Community Leisure Centre Stage A – Detailed Design, as a Member of the Three Rivers Partnership. He remained in the chamber.

#### 153. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 June 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 154. **URGENT BUSINESS**

Councillor Peter Webb asked the Lead Member for Local Delivery (Councillor David Milsted) to provide an update on Minute Reference 149 relating to the Dog Warden Scheme.

Councillor David Milsted stated that the suggestion from Members, that Town and Parish Councils be able to buy extra hours from the contracted company was put to the company. It was met with a favourable response and the company have quoted an hourly rate for this service. A further meeting needs to take place next week between the company and the Council's Environmental Protection & Private Sector Housing Team Leader. Assuming all goes well, town and parish councils should receive a letter shortly afterwards, informing them of the service. This extra service will not entail any additional work or financial contribution from this authority.

Councillor Peter Webb welcomed the update stating that it was good to see the service being safeguarded.

## 155. REVISED HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Councillor Peter Webb stated that this was Interim Housing Projects Manager's last appearance at a Cabinet meeting as she was leaving the Council after many years of excellent service.

Councillor Graham Carr-Jones added his thanks to the Interim Housing Projects Manager and to the Choice Based Lettings Steering Group for their work in preparing this document.

The report was introduced by the Housing & Community Safety Policy Manager. Members noted that there was a government requirement to introduce a choice based lettings scheme by 2010, that the authority has previously decided to enter into a sub-regional scheme including the boroughs of Bournemouth and Poole, that there was a statutory duty to publish an allocations policy. Although the policy was similar to that of most other authorities, it does address the rural nature of the district and the need to give some preference to local people.

Members discussed the composition of the Priority Panel and whether there was value in having elected representation on the panel. They noted the poor response to the consultation exercise, in which only six or seven responses were received from all the town and parish councils, registered social landlords and key stakeholders who were contacted.

Concern was expressed about excluding people due to rent arrears. However, it was noted that there is a strong element of discretion built into the policy to allow for individual circumstances, that the government has made it clear that it does not wish to see blanket exclusions and that the policy makes it difficult to exclude anyone from the register.

Members noted that communication of the policy would include the production of a summary, distribution of leaflets to appropriate outlets, road-shows and making sure officers are available to answer questions from the public.

Concern was raised about not informing applicants if they have been unsuccessful in applying for a property. The cost of such an exercise was seen as being prohibitive. Members noted that information about each property allocated will be made available in all the same places as property advertisements.

**Resolved** that subject to the amendment set out below, (to paragraph 12.7 of the Report) to approve the revised draft Allocations Policy.

### **Serious Offenders**

12.7 Serious offenders will not be excluded from the housing register or an offer of accommodation without an appropriate assessment of their eligibility in the first instance, which will take MAPPA guidance into account. However they will only be re-housed once a multi-agency risk assessment is carried out in line with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and there is suitable and safe accommodation available.

**156. DORSET HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008-2013**

Councillor Graham Carr-Jones praised the officers' efforts to put together a comprehensive and detailed document.

The Report was introduced by the Housing & Community Safety Policy Manager, who drew Members attention to the requirements of the 2002 Homelessness Act to produce a homelessness strategy and review the service every five years. Dorset districts and boroughs have carried out individual reviews of homelessness services but adopted a sub-regional approach and developed a draft joint strategy that provides for shared opportunities and enhanced consistency, whilst maintaining distinct local initiatives where appropriate.

Members noted the possible increased pressure on this service area as a result of the current economic climate and an increase in repossessions. The possibility of the establishment of a local/regional housing company was discussed.

**Resolved**

- 1) That the typing error on page 40 of the Strategy be addressed.
- 2) That mention of the Private Sector Leasing Scheme be included in the North Dorset section of the Strategy.
- 3) That subject to the above amendments, the draft Homelessness Strategy be approved for consultation.

**157. GILLINGHAM COMMUNITY LEISURE CENTRE STAGE A CONDITIONS – DETAILED DESIGN**

The Report was introduced by the General Manager (Development & Resources), who highlighted the significant amount of money involved in Stage A of the project and what the funding would be used for.

Members noted that Gillingham Town Council had contributed a significant amount of funding towards the project. Concern was expressed about the use the term 'consultant's fees'.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To note the report and to note that the proposed decision to release £495,000 capital, collected and held by the Council from developer contributions, to Three Rivers Partnership to enable the detailed design to be completed is a delegated decision.
- 2) That the term 'consultants fees' be replaced by 'professional fees' when the report is produced for the Portfolio holder decision.

**158. JOINT PROCUREMENT PROJECT FOR AN IT SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE**

The Report was introduced by the Environmental Protection & Private Sector Housing Team Leader, who stated that the current IT system was developed in-

house a number of years ago. It is starting to 'fall apart' and is becoming more of a hindrance to the section's work than an aid. Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, West Dorset District Council and Purbeck District Council have all informally agreed to form a partnership with this Council to investigate the joint procurement idea further.

A discussion took place about potential efficiency savings and economies of scale that could be gained through a joint approach.

**Resolved** to support and approve the continued involvement of North Dorset in the partnership with West Dorset, Purbeck and Weymouth and Portland to progress a joint procurement for an Environmental Health system or systems.

159. **STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT (TDS) – ADOPTION AS A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

The Report was introduced by Councillor Deborah Croney who gave history of efforts to produce a Town Design Statement for Sturminster Newton and the involvement of SturQuest in the production of the Statement. She added that the Statement would provide a valuable guide to the Development Control Committee when considering applications.

Members noted the results of the formal consultation and the potential value of similar statements to other towns in the District.

**Resolved**

- 1) To note the consultation responses to the draft Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement and supporting documents.
- 2) To recommend to Council that the Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement and associated documents (amended in accordance with the changes set out in Appendix 4) be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to form part of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF).

160. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE (APRIL 2007 – MARCH 2008)**

Councillor Peter Webb welcomed the Policy & Performance Officer to the meeting.

Members noted comments received by refuse collectors in Gillingham and Stalbridge about improved cleanliness in the towns. It was noted that less litter is being dropped, possibly as a result of increased street cleaning.

Members questioned the accuracy of some of the safety & health indicators and whether targets which are shown as not, were in fact met.

**Resolved**

- 1) That Officers proof read the document to correct any factual inaccuracies, paying particular attention to the safety & health indicators and BV84a.

- 2) That subject to any amendments, to note the year end performance of the Council for the period April 2007 to March 2008 and support management action where it is required to be improved.

161. **DECLARATION OF 3 LOCAL NATURE RESERVES**

The Report was introduced by Councillor Deborah Croney and the Environment Policy Manager.

A discussion took place about the added responsibility placed on the Council as a result of the declaration and the potential to raise funding for the reserves.

Members noted that consultation would be advertised in the local press and that there was opportunity for all individuals and groups to respond.

**Resolved**

- 1) To formally consult on the proposed declaration of The Milldown, Castle Hill and Riverside Meadows as Local Nature Reserves.
- 2) To invite The Blandford School and the Milldown First School to take part in the consultation exercise.

162. **POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE – REVIEW OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION**

The Report was introduced by Councillor David Milsted, who chaired the Review.

Member noted the need to use the planning system effectively to secure the aspirations of the Council and its residents.

**Resolved** to note the recommendations contained in the report and to request that the Planning Policy Panel consider the Report in full.

**The meeting closed at 13:00pm.**

**CHAIRMAN**