

NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON
FRIDAY, 25 APRIL 2008 AT 10.00AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, NORDON,
SALISBURY ROAD, BLANDFORD FORUM**

Present: A C Kay, Vice-Chairman, in the Chair
W Batty-Smith MBE
Mrs A M Burch
I A Campbell
G Carr-Jones
N Cook
B G Cooper
M W Cox
Mrs D A Croney
C Dowden
D C T Fox
V G Fox
J R Hickish
Mrs N Hickish
S G Hitchings (until 12 noon)
M Jeffery
Mrs D L Jones MBE (until 11.00am)
T Lever
G A Miller
D Milsted
R E Moyle
Mrs V R Pothecary
J M Roake
I Stewart
C M Tomlinson
P Webb
M J White

Apologies: Councillors Col B R Anderson, MVO; D L Beer; Mrs S J Hunt; N Mason; Lt Col M D Oliver and J E T Tanner.

Also Present:

Ian McNeil, Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee
Lachlan Fraser, Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee

**102. PRESENTATION - CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS "HOME CHOICE" IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Prior to the formal opening of the meeting, Council received a presentation on Choice Based Lettings from Kate Evans (Choice Based Lettings Project Manager) from Poole Borough Council.

Members noted that there was a Government target for all authorities to operate Choice Based Lettings by 2010 and that a group of Councils in Dorset had agreed to work together to improve opportunities to move within a wider area.

It was proposed that the system would work using priority bandings, regular advertising of available properties and a bidding process.

The report on Choice Based Lettings considered by the Cabinet on 21 April 2008 was circulated to Council for information.

103. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the public.

104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Campbell declared a personal interest in the item at Minute 111.1 as the owner of land affected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act

Councillor Carr-Jones declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item at Minute 107 because a tenant of his has applied for a grant under a Scheme which forms part of the Strategy. Councillor Carr-Jones left the room during its consideration and the vote on it.

Councillor Cooper declared a personal interest in the item at Minute 107 as a private property landlord in North Dorset.

Councillor Mrs Jones declared personal interests in the items at Minute 107 as a home-owner and potential beneficiary from the Strategy and at Minute 108 as a Council representative on Post Watch.

105. MINUTES

The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 March 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

106. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES AND URGENT BUSINESS

Visit by the Earl of Wessex to Gillingham Rugby Club: The Vice-Chairman advised that the Chairman of the Council and the Chief Executive were absent from the Council meeting as they were attending a visit by the Earl of Wessex to Gillingham Rugby Club following the Club being runners up in the Queen's Award.

Urgent Motion

The Vice-Chairman advised that he had accepted an urgent motion on to the Agenda for the meeting in relation to the returning of Landfill Tax monies to local authorities as the item could not await the next meeting of the Council. (See Minute 111.2 below).

107. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2008/2010**

Council received the report of the Senior Environmental Health Officer seeking the adoption of the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008/10, together with a tabled paper outlining amendments and additions to the report following its consideration by Cabinet on 21 April 2008.

Resolved

To approve the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008/10, subject to the insertion in the Strategy where the phrase 'Eradicate Fuel Poverty for Vulnerable Households' appears of the words, 'to help', so that in all cases it reads 'to help eradicate fuel poverty'.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to work towards achieving its strategic objectives regarding private sector housing and continue to work towards achieving key Government strategy objectives and National Indicators.

Councillor Carr-Jones declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the decision above and left the room during its consideration and the vote on it.

108. **POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF POST OFFICES IN NORTH DORSET**

Members received the report of the Regeneration Policy Manager informing them of the possible closure of Post Offices in the District and considering the possible effects and support that may be offered.

Councillor Campbell advised that Dorset Strategic Partnership had considered this issue at its last meeting and were seeking a cross County response to it.

Resolved

1. to note the proposals for Post Office Closures, the timetable for consultation and agree that Officers should work with partners to consider options for providing support and investigating alternatives at the appropriate time;
2. that a survey of existing Post Offices, as outlined in paragraph 21 of the report, be undertaken at this stage, including seeking ideas for alternative ways of managing services, such as the outreach service at Hazelbury Bryan;
3. that the Council promotes the remaining Post Offices and alternative methods of payment to reduce the pressure on the Customer Contact team to accept cash payments.

Reason for Decision

To ascertain the anticipated effect on each Post Office if it is nominated for closure and what support or assistance might be required.

109. **ANNUAL REPORTS 2007/08**

The Council received the Annual Reports by the Chairmen of the following Committees and Panel, which covered work carried out during the 2007/08 Council Year:

1. **Accounts and Audit Committee**
2. **Development Control Committee and Planning Policy Panel**
3. **Licensing and Orders Committee**
4. **Overview and Scrutiny, Policy Review and Service Review Committees**
5. **Personnel Committee**
6. **Political Management Panel**
7. **Standards Committee**

The Chairmen thanked the Members and officers involved for their support to the committees over the last year.

Ian McNeil, Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee, thanked all the Members of the Committee for their contribution to its work and the Vice Chairman, Lachlan Fraser, who had been Acting Chairman for much of the year. He highlighted to Council that the Standards Committee membership was being increased in the light of the transfer to the Authority of the local filtering of complaints relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Council thanked Ian and Lachlan for their work in chairing the Standards Committee during 2007/08.

Resolved

To receive the reports.

Reason for Decision

It was a requirement of the Council's Constitution that the Council receive reports from its Committees and the Political Management Panel.

At this point in the meeting (11.10am) the Council adjourned for 10 minutes.

110. **CABINET REPORT FOR MARCH AND APRIL 2008 AND GENERAL QUESTION TIME**

Members of the Cabinet presented a report on the Cabinet's activities for March and April 2008. Additional items were reported and Portfolio Holders were questioned on the matters reported.

LEADER

Ministry of Justice – A British Statement of Values

The Leader reported that he had received a letter from Michael Willis, MP, at the Ministry of Justice launching a national debate to develop a British Statement of values. He asked that Members who wished to feed any ideas into the debate let him know.

DEPUTY LEADER

Public Conveniences – Article in the Blackmore Vale Magazine

In response to a question Councillor Roake advised Council that the recent article in the Blackmore Vale Magazine regarding the transfer of the management of public conveniences from the District to Town Councils was mis-leading. The plans for the conveniences had not changed in that each would be modernised before being transferred. Stephen Hill undertook to circulate to all Members the schedule of the current situation with regard to each facility.

ACCESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Choice Based Lettings

Councillor Carr-Jones advised Council that, further to the earlier presentation on Choice Based Lettings, he would keep Council up to date on progress with the project.

Signpost Housing – Starter Tenancies

Members noted that Signpost had introduced 'Starter Tenancies' for new tenants. These tenancies were issued for a period of 12 months at the end of which, if there were no problems associated with the tenancy, they would convert to a fully assured tenancy.

Signpost Tour

Councillor Milsted reported back on the recent Signpost Housing Association tour for Members. He encouraged all Members to attend the joint Policy and Service Review Committee meeting on Thursday 19 June at 2.00pm when representatives of the Association would be present.

COMMUNITY + SAFETY AND HEALTH

Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Collection Rates

Councillor Moyle reported that the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates collection rates were now 98.3% and 98.7% respectively. Council congratulated Revenues staff on achieving such high levels of collection.

ECONOMY

Destination Dorset – Website and Tourism

Councillor Cox apologised for not mentioning Gillingham in the Tourism Enterprises part of his report.

Question from Councillor David Fox to Councillor Cox – North Dorset Business Park

Councillor Cox advised that he had responded to the question asked by Councillor Fox on the Business Park at the last Council Meeting and would circulate a copy of his response to all Members.

Business Breakfasts

Members noted that the first business breakfast meeting had been held on the morning of the Council Meeting and had been a very interesting event. The next Business Breakfast was scheduled for May. He encouraged Members to attend.

111. **MOTIONS**

Council considered the following motions:

111.1 Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000

Proposed by Councillor David Milsted and seconded by Councillor Geoffrey Miller.

On being put to the vote the motion was approved, as printed on the Agenda for the meeting, as follows:

‘This Council calls upon DEFRA:

- To cause the deletion of the 2026 deadline in Section 53 of the CROW Act 2000 from the Statute Book, and
- To put into the public domain the information obtained by the Discovering Lost Ways Project to date.

This Council seeks the support of Robert Walter MP in this regard.’

111.2 Returning Landfill Tax Monies to Local Authorities

Proposed by Councillor Michael Roake and seconded by Councillor Michael Cox.

This motion had been accepted by the Chairman of the Council as urgent because the action required could not await the next meeting of the Council.

Councillor Milsted tabled a proposed amended motion, which was accepted by Councillor Roake as proposer, and therefore became the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was then approved by Council as follows:

'This Council notes that a commitment was given by the government when it introduced the Landfill Tax in 2003 that the tax would be revenue neutral to local authorities. Nationally, the figure to be collected over the next three years is estimated at £1.5bn.

This Council formally requests that the Chief Executive write to the Environment Secretary to ask for a statement of how this money collected via the Landfill Tax is to be returned to local authorities to invest in recycling.

Further, this Council requests the Secretary of State to accommodate Second Tier Authorities in the regulations for redistribution of Landfill Tax, in order to reward those whose Waste Collection practices are delivering the best recycling results for their Disposal Authority.'

The meeting ended at 12.20pm.

CHAIRMAN