

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Minutes of the Meeting of the New Forest Association of Local Councils

Held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on 15 January, 2015 at 7.00pm

Parish/Town Council	Name
Ashurst & Colbury	Sally Arnold
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison
Brockenhurst	John Korbey
Burley	Neal Martin
Copythorne	Mike Derrick Stuart Bullen-Jarvis
Denny Lodge	Mo Dawkins
East Boldre	Kim Penna
Exbury	Alison Tilbury
Godshill	Ann Cakebread Bev Cornish
Hordle	Sue Bown Marion Still
Hythe & Dibden	Brenda Smith
Lymington	Alan Penson
Lyndhurst	George Bisson
Marchwood	Keith Petty
Milford	Graham Wells
Minstead	Richard Taylor Helen Bennett
New Milton	Goff Beck – Chairman Graham Flexman (Clerk) David Hawkins (Mayor)
Redlynch	John Blocksidge
Sway	Stephen Tarling Barry Rickman
New Forest District Council	Dave Yates Bob Jackson Rosemary Rutins
New Forest National Park Authority	Steve Avery
Apologies	
Ann Sturgess	Ashurst & Colbury
Peter Turner	Breamore
Cllrs Lane & Spark	Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley
Debbie Vine	Fordingbridge
Jane Arigho	Hyde
Vicky Eden	Sandleheath

1. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed representatives from towns and parishes, with Bob Jackson from NFDC speaking on Council Tax and Rosemary Rutins on the forthcoming elections. The Chairman also welcomed Steve Avery from the NPA and Dave Yates of NFDC.

The Chairman attended the last HALC Board meeting in Winchester on Saturday 6 December, 2014. There was a presentation on Superfast Broadband from HCC Link Cllr Andrew Gibson, per report attached.

At that meeting, HALC agreed to become a Living Wage Employer as a sector exemplar and on 15 December, 2014 HALC signed a Corporate Partnership with Rotary District 1110 (per press releases also attached).

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2014 were approved by those present.

3. Presentation on Council Tax

The Chairman introduced Bob Jackson, Executive Director of NFDC who provided an update on the recently announced Local Government Finance Settlement for 2015/16.

Bob highlighted the main points as follows:

- No increase in Council Tax for sixth year
- Front line Services protected
- Overall Government Settlement Funding reduced by 4%
- In the 6 years since 2010/11, NFDC Budget Spend has **reduced** by £3m (13%)
- Good news – Few Surprises
- Bad news – Government headline 1.8% reduction in “Spending Power”
Government Settlement Funding reduced by 14.6% in 2015/16
Council Tax Referendum limit 2% for 2015/16
Council Tax and Settlement Funding reduced by 6.1% in 2015/16

In regard to Local Town and Parish Council Finance Settlement issues, the Local Government Minister highlighted a large increase in precepts over the Parliament (15%).

But there was no indication that any action was imminent, noting the local increase in precept since 2010/11 is on average 6.6%, albeit some were significantly higher.

As far as the HALC response to the attached NALC Settlement issues is concerned:

- HALC says there is a need for an overhaul of Local Government Funding that revives democracy through community interest, engagement and involvement
- HALC opposes government setting referenda criteria and a capping regime on parish and town councils
- HALC do not agree with the high level of resource that NALC put into the current work on enforcing local council tax grant support (having advised our councils that the precept should have covered this risk from that point two years ago)

The Local Grant of £392k was introduced in 2013/14 with the aim to offset the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. In 2015/16 NFDC will provide a Local Grant of £200k.

In answer to a question from the floor, it was confirmed that the Local Grant is likely to disappear over the next two years.

The Chairman thanked Bob for explaining the recently announced Finance Settlement so succinctly to members and its implications locally.

4. Reports of Ambassadors

The Chairman had contacted Neil Beswick - the Local Bus and Home to School Transport Manager (Passenger Transport Group, Hampshire County Council) who addressed the NFALC meeting last Easter on 17 April, 2014 regarding local bus services.

Members may recall the six or so options put forward as part of a consultation exercise to ensure HCC achieved their aim of saving £1.5 million from their subsidized bus and community transport budget. The consultation ended in May, with recently announced changes to local bus services that Neil Beswick has tabulated, as attached.

Chairman noted 2 public meetings were held in Lymington recently as part of the process.

5. Reports of Focus Groups

a) Dibden Bay – In the absence of Alison Hoare, Keith Petty introduced this topic and it was noted that Southampton's port operator ABP had purchased two industrial estates, intimating the move will contribute to the city's economic success. Associated British Ports (ABP) says its purchase of the Marchwood and Cracknore Hard industrial parks will boost the local economy and add "long-term value" to the company's operations. But it has also led to fears that ABP wants to develop nearby Dibden Bay, with the firm awaiting a decision on its bid for the Marchwood military port next door.

b) Broadband – Steve Avery referred to isolated problems, and although 95% of the Forest will be covered, there will remain outlying areas that are not covered. As Superfast Broadband is being rolled out by HCC, those areas not covered should canvas their local County Councillors, it was suggested. The Chairman said at the last HALC Board meeting, there was a presentation from HCC Link Cllr Andrew Gibson on Rural Broadband and it may be worth contacting him at andrew.ga.gibson@bt.com

c) Cycling Liaison – Neal Martin reminded members that the Cycling Code has been produced and is being widely promoted. The draft Cycling Charter was released in April last year and many comments had been received. In June, NPA members agreed that they would not support the Charter unless it included a cap of 1,000 riders and that participants should be clearly identified with both front and rear numbers. Support for the Charter (including those key clauses and various changes in response to comments received) is being sought before finalizing and launching the Charter after the NPA meeting on 22 January 2015 to approve the final text. Neal said it was important to draw a line in the sand and publish the Charter once approved.

[Post Meeting Note: The document (including key clauses) was approved by 14 votes to two but members agreed to review the situation in 12 months' time]

During October, two cycling events took place on the same day. The Safety Advisory Group had written to both organisations with the Gridiron reversing its route in order to avoid clashing with the Wiggle event going the other way.

d) Light Pollution – In the absence of representatives from Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley, it was agreed to attach their report to the minutes of this meeting.

e) HALC – The Chairman informed members that HALC Board meetings will in future be held at their Eastleigh Borough Council offices rather than in Winchester.

6. New Forest District Council

Dave Yates deferred to Bob Jackson and Rosemary Rutins who spoke on behalf of NFDC

7. Forthcoming Elections

Rosemary Rutins, NFDC Democratic Services Manager briefed members on the election timetable and associated matters before/after 7 May, 2015. (Presentation slides attached).

8. National Park Authority

Steve Avery gave a brief update on the NPA Management Plan consultation. Responses are currently being reviewed and the intention is to go out to public consultation on a revised draft plan later in the spring. Mention was made of local quadrant meetings, with the next SW Quadrant meeting due to take place in New Milton on 22 January, 2015.

In regard to Neighbourhood Plans, this new initiative was introduced by the Localism Act (2011) and allows local communities to prepare a plan for development and land use in their area. As the New Forest is a “parished” area, neighbourhood plans can be undertaken by parish or town councils, if they choose to prepare one. The National Park Authority supports communities that want to prepare a neighbourhood plan by giving advice and assistance to the town/parish council.

Both New Milton and Totton & Eling Town Councils have applied to New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority to designate a ‘Neighbourhood Area’ for the whole of their town council areas. Before the neighbourhood area is confirmed, there is a period in which representations can be made regarding the proposed boundary of their respective Neighbourhood Plan areas.

The Government is keen for local communities to take part in this initiative, and nationwide more than 200 Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted so far. It enables local councils to influence where new developments take place. While it can be a convoluted process, there are tangible benefits for those adopting Neighbourhood Plans locally.

9. Proposal from Minstead Parish Council

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2, previously circulated with the agenda, detailing the proposal from Minstead Parish Council.

With the work on the Cycling Charter for Event Organisers reaching a natural conclusion in respect of our detailed involvement, it was suggested that the time is right to champion a new cause with a representative of Minstead Parish Council taking the lead role in this very worthy project, and this was agreed by those present at the meeting. It was then

RESOLVED:

That the New Forest Association of Local Councils (NFALC) strongly supports the proposal from Minstead Parish Council regarding the evaluation and development of a strategic cycle network along the A337, and that this be included as an additional action point in the NFPA Management Plan update.

10. Any Other Business

John Korbey had been contacted by the Parish Council Purchasing Group (PCPG) and it was agreed to forward details of this organization with the minutes. See www.pcpq.co.uk

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the New Forest Association of Local Councils will be held at the **Hythe & Dibden Parish Council Chamber, The Grove, St John’s Street, Hythe, Hampshire SO45 6BZ** on Thursday 16 April, 2015 at 7.00 pm.

It was agreed the AGM will be held on 16 July 2015 and the following meeting on 15 October 2015, at venues to be confirmed. There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.00 pm.

Chairman

Date