

Dear Councillor

**COUNCIL - MONDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2024**

Please find attached, for consideration at the meeting of the Council on Monday, 9 December 2024, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

**Agenda No    Item**

8.        **Report of Cabinet - 4 December 2024 (Pages 3 - 60)**

The report of Cabinet and the background reports that are the subject of recommendations to Council, are enclosed.

10.       **Allocation of Seats and Appointments to Committees and Panels (Pages 61 - 64)**

Appendix 1 – Committee and Panel Memberships is enclosed.

11.       **Questions (Pages 65 - 68)**

To ask questions under Standing Order 22. Questions received are enclosed.

Yours sincerely

**Kate Ryan**  
**Chief Executive**

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**Council – 9 December 2024**

**Report of Cabinet – [4 December 2024](#)**

## **Part I – Items Resolved by Cabinet**

### **1. Medium Term Financial Plan - Update**

**Portfolio** – Finance and Corporate

#### **Cabinet Resolution:**

That Cabinet:

1. noted the revised MTFP forecasts, as outlined within the report and appendices;
2. endorsed development of the options identified to close the budget gap for 2025/26 and through to 2028/29;
3. endorsed the approach taken to set the Asset Maintenance and Capital Programme Budgets for 2025/26;
4. approved the continuation for 3 years of the annual £195,306 financial support provided to Citizens Advice New Forest (CANF), commencing 1 April 2025; and
5. approved the latest forecast position with regards to the Waste transition and roll-out costs, noting that an increase in transition costs is offset through a forecast reduction in 2025/26 roll-out costs.

#### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the report acknowledging that the Medium Term Finance Plan ran through to 2028/29. He highlighted the funding gap at the end of the period as £2.693 m and that this needed to be addressed.

The Portfolio Holder reported that paragraph 4 of the report set out the economic commentary around the Autumn Statement. It was necessary to address the budget deficit by minimising expenditure, making efficiencies and maximising income which was not always popular. It was important to produce a balanced budget and to deliver the services which were important to local residents.

There were significant challenges and costs associated with the delivery of the Waste Strategy, with legislative changes and the desire to improve recycling and reduce residual waste. It was also highlighted that the transformation programme needed further consideration in terms of expenditure and savings leading up to budget setting next year.

A recommendation in the report sought to continue support to Citizens Advice New Forest with a proposed three year settlement which would support those residents in need in the community.

The Portfolio Holder reported there was a significant capital programme detailed in the report, which would have an impact on the level of reserves going forwards.

Finally, attention was drawn to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), in particular the £9.96 million held in reserves for housing acquisitions and development to support the delivery of more council owned housing in the District.

The Assistant Director - Finance confirmed the report provided an update of the latest position of the Medium Term Financial Plan. He highlighted paragraph 4 within the economic commentary with a summary of the key elements of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, including local government spending power to increase and an increase in Local Government Grants.

Paragraphs 15-25 of the report provided details on changes to the financial plan since the previous update. It was noted that the updated forecast deficit for 2025/26 was £466,000, rising to £2,693,000 for 2028/29. Significant changes to this included the impact on the decision to increase fees and charges in Keyhaven and car parking, the crystallisation of vacant posts as well as reinstatement of the support for homelessness, due to ongoing demand in the year as well as changes to the waste and transformation programme. It was highlighted that a recommendation was to support Citizens Advice for three years with an annual cost of £195,306 and this had been supported by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Work would continue in order to address the budget shortfall.

## **2. Half Yearly Update Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report**

**Portfolio** – Finance and Corporate / Housing and Homelessness

### **Cabinet Resolution:**

That the half yearly update be noted.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness reported that the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel had considered the report for housing complaints handling in the first half of the year. He felt it was important to recognise that the report was open and honest, covering all aspects of housing complaints, providing an opportunity to learn from them.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate highlighted that the report was before Cabinet due to the changes to the complaints process which came into force on 1 April 2024.

The Information Governance and Complaints Manager, reported as two Portfolio Holders had set out, that the report covers the changes implemented to the Council's complaint handling process as a result of the two new Complaint Handling Codes updates from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. The report detailed changes to members scrutiny of complaints and the new involvement of Cabinet in relation the process.

The report detailed the half yearly update on complaints. Key aspects included the Council's complaint handling across all services and complaints from tenants, under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman. 125 Corporate complaints had been received in the half yearly period, an increase on previous years. There had also been an increase in the number of tenant complaints received. It was recognised that learning from complaints was important in order to improve service delivery.

Finally, the report also included compliments received from the public to officers to show positive feedback.

The Leader expressed her thanks for the detailed report and the inclusion of compliments received.

A question was asked from a non-Cabinet member regarding complaints received which might relate to other authorities, such as the County Council or Towns / Parishes. The Information Governance and

Complaints Manager clarified that all complaints were reviewed at the point they were received, and should the District Council not be responsible for the matter identified in the complaint, the complainant would be redirected to the appropriate authority for resolution.

One other non-Cabinet Member expressed the view that overall the number of complaints received was low and that there was a good level of satisfaction with the delivery of Council services. The opportunity to learn and improve the performance of services was also welcomed.

## **Part II – Recommendations to Council**

### **3. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26, Policy Review and Council Tax Premiums**

**Portfolio** – Finance and Corporate

#### **Recommended:**

That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of:

1. The changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2025:
  - a) The removal of the Band D cap at an overall cost to precepting authorities of £33k;
  - b) The increase of the de-minimis rule to £2 at no net cost; and
  - c) The alignment of childcare costs with Universal Credit for all claims at a saving of £3k to precepting authorities.
2. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Prosecution Policy.

#### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the report and reported that the Council was responsible for determining its Council Tax reduction scheme. He expressed his thanks to a member led task and finish group which had carried out a review of the current scheme and considered changes for the next financial year as well as the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services reported there were three main components to the report; a review of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes, a review of the Council Tax Scheme Sanctions and Prosecutions Policy and the prescribed exceptions to Council Tax premiums for second homes and empty homes.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme had 8,000 claimants and the cost of this was £10 million, which was shared between all precepting authorities. A review had been carried out of the scheme and a consultation of the proposed changes took place over a 6 week period, resulting in 225 responses. Feedback had been received from Hampshire County Council expressing concern about the changes to the scheme which were more generous and therefore reduce the income it

would receive, in light of the financial position of the County Council. The recommendations which sought approval was the removal of the Band D cap, an increase of the de-minimus rule to £2 and aligning childcare costs with Universal Credit.

The Council Tax Scheme Sanctions and Prosecutions Policy was reviewed every three years and as there had been no changes to legislation, only minor changes had been made to this policy.

Finally, no exceptions had been recommended to the Council Tax premiums relating to second homes and empty homes. It was reported that contact would be made with those affected by those premiums which would come into force from 1 April 2025.

A non-Cabinet member expressed support to the recommendations contained within the report. In response to a point raised by a non-Cabinet member in relation to armed forces veterans and the impact any compensation received, might have on any Council tax reduction, it was confirmed that the Council had agreed last year to continue with the income disregard in the assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction and therefore support was already being provided to armed forces veterans.

## **Appendix 1 – Background Report to Cabinet**

### **4. Council Tax 2025/26 – Setting the Tax Base**

**Portfolio:** Finance and Corporate

#### **Recommended:**

That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of:

1. the calculation of the tax base for the year 2025/26 of 73,355.0; and
2. pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2025/26 as detailed in paragraph 13.

#### **Cabinet discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the report highlighting that it was a legal requirement for the Council to set the Council Tax base, from which the precepts were calculated.



The Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services reported that the Council Tax Base for 2025/26 involved detailed calculations looking at the number of properties in each council tax band for each town and parish. From this, the discounts, exemptions and other reductions as well as the Council Tax support was considered and converted to Band D equivalent. A forecast of the impact of the introduction of the second homes premium from April next year and the estimated in year collection rate had also been included in the calculation.

The overall tax base increase for 2025/26 is 98.3, however due to the second homes premium, the total tax base proposed is 73,355, an increase of 983.50.

## **Appendix 2 – Background Report to Cabinet**

### **5. Leisure - Update and Proposed Fees and Charges 2025**

**Portfolio:** Finance and Corporate / Community, Safety and Wellbeing

#### **Cabinet resolution:**

1. That the operational update from the Council's leisure partner be noted.

#### **Recommended:**

2. That Council approves the proposed increases in fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1.

#### **Cabinet discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing introduced the report and expressed his full support to the recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate acknowledged increasing fees and charges was not popular, but felt it was important to work with Freedom Leisure recognising the good services provided to customers and that they would still be provided at outstanding value for money.

The Assistant Director – Finance clarified that Freedom Leisure had the ability to increase charges without seeking consent from the Council provided the increases were not greater than CPI, and that they did not relate to certain protected services such as Active Lifestyle products. In recent years the flexibilities in the contract had been sufficient for the price increases, however with the long term increases in utility costs and increases to staffing costs due to the rise in national insurance, this

was no longer possible, without an impact on service delivery and hence the recommendation put forward.

### **Appendix 3 – Background Report to Cabinet**

Cabinet – 4 December 2024

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26, Policy Review and Council Tax Premiums**

Purpose	For decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Council has a Council Tax Reduction scheme to support those on a low income with paying their council tax. The Council has discretion to set a local scheme for working age claimants, with pension age claims being administered in accordance with government regulations. The scheme is reviewed annually with proposed changes requiring Council agreement before coming into effect from 1 April.</p> <p>The Council has a Council Tax Support Scheme Prosecutions and Penalties policy for dealing with fraud and error. The policy has been reviewed as part of a cyclical review.</p> <p>The Council is introducing new council tax premiums from 1 April 2025 for long term empty properties and properties which are periodically occupied, commonly known as “second homes”. The report provides details of the Governments prescribed exceptions to these premiums.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of:</b></p> <p><b>1. The changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2025:</b></p> <p><b>a) The removal of the Band D cap at an overall cost to precepting authorities of £33k;</b></p> <p><b>b) The increase of the de-minimis rule to £2 at no net cost; and</b></p> <p><b>c) The alignment of childcare costs with Universal Credit for all claims at a</b></p>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>saving of £3k to precepting authorities</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Prosecution Policy</b></p>
Reasons for recommendation	To approve changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme from 1 April 2025 and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Penalties policy.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance & Corporate
Strategic Director	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation
Officer Contact	<p>Ryan Stevens  Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services  02380 285693  <a href="mailto:Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk">Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

## **Introduction and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Council Tax Reduction scheme 2025/26, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Penalties Policy, and to provide details of the governments exceptions to the empty home premium and second home premium which are being introduced from 1 April 2025.

## **Council Tax Reduction scheme**

2. Local authorities are responsible for determining their own local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to support those of working age on low income with paying their council tax. The Government stipulated that there must be no change to the level of support that pensioners receive and there are no plans to localise the scheme for this group. There are no plans to include Council Tax Reduction within Universal Credit.
3. The Council must formally approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme no later than 11 March in any year, to take effect from 1 April.

4. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme fulfils the prescribed requirements for localised schemes.
5. There are currently 7,868 claimants receiving Council Tax Reduction. Of these 4,213 are working age and 3,655 are of pensionable age. Appendix 1 provides caseload trend data.
6. The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme costs approximately £10 million, with this cost (foregone Council Tax) being shared between all precepting authorities.
7. The amount of Council Tax Reduction awarded affects the tax base of each organisation.

### **Review process**

8. A Task & Finish Group met to review the current scheme and discussed proposed changes effective from 1 April 2025.
9. The recommendations of the Task & Finish Group were considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview Scrutiny Panel who make recommendations to the Cabinet and full Council.

### **The current local Council Tax Reduction scheme**

10. The council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme protects vulnerable households so that some of the changes to the scheme do not apply to them. A person is vulnerable if they (or a partner) are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Severe Disablement Allowance.
11. The council's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme includes:
  - A requirement for working age claimants (except vulnerable households) to pay a minimum of 10% of council tax.
  - Council Tax Reductions are capped at band D (so that claimants living in higher banded properties receive support based on band D). There is no band cap for vulnerable households.
  - A savings limit of £6,000 (£16,000 for vulnerable households), so that claimants with more than £6,000 in savings are not entitled to any reduction.
  - The council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme incentivises work by disregarding £35.00 a week of earnings.

### **Matters considered by Task and Finish Group**

12. Collecting council tax from those on low income is difficult, with significantly more work for officers. Administration has also increased, notably in working with those affected. In 2024/25 council tax bills increased by an average of 5%. This upward trend is likely to continue in the forthcoming years.
13. The Council Tax in-year collection rate for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, who are not a pensioner or vulnerable, is currently 77.6% (98.7% for non-Council Tax Reduction households) and during 2023/24 1,384 reminder notices were issued. There is administration and costs involved in collecting council tax, including dealing with customer queries, postage and making payment arrangements.
14. Many of the claimants have been affected by the increase in the cost of living, in particular fuel and food inflation which adversely affects low-income households. It is noted that there are some reports suggesting that Universal Credit rates are insufficient to meet day-to-day household expenditure. The Group considered recent budget announcements including the increase of Universal Credit being 1.7% from April 2025 and the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance from 1 April 2025, meaning those receiving support may experience further financial challenges if household living costs increase beyond that level of Universal Credit increase. There are also changes to Universal Credit and the amounts that can be deducted from third parties, meaning the recovery of council tax arrears will become harder.
15. The Group also considered the additional income from the Council's introduction of the Second Homes Premium, with the decision to implement this having been taken in February 2024. The current forecast overall net gain is just over £2 million per annum in additional income between all precepting authorities, with this income built into base MTFP assumptions by NFDC, and Hampshire County Council.

### **Discussion on proposed changes for 2025/26**

16. The Task and Finish group reviewed various aspects of the current scheme. This included:
  - a) the 10% minimum contribution
  - b) the Band D cap
  - c) the de-minimis rule
  - d) childcare costs

#### **A. The 10% minimum contribution**

17. The Group discussed the principle of claimants having to pay an amount towards their council tax, which has been part of the scheme since 2013. Currently, any award of Council Tax Reduction is based on 90% of the council tax liability (unless vulnerable, in which case it is based on 100% of the council tax liability), so there is a minimum contribution of at least 10% to pay. The proposal that was subject to consultation was to remove the 10% minimum contribution so that any award of Council Tax Reduction is based on 100% of the council tax liability.
18. The financial cost of this proposal is to increase the level of support (forego Council Tax) totalling approximately £297k per annum, affecting approximately 2,500 claimants, 1,000 of which currently receive the maximum level of support of 90% due to their income level.
19. From the consultation 59% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal with 19% neither agreeing or disagreeing. The Group also considered the response from Hampshire County Council. Their response recognised that local authorities need to set schemes to support local needs, but due to their severe cost pressures of providing adult social care and children's social care they expressed "concerns about making schemes more generous if that would have a significant impact on income".
20. The Group discussed the consultation responses, and although sympathetic to Hampshire County Councils financial situation, on reflection and noting the additional income from the council tax premiums considered that the scheme should be further supporting our most vulnerable households; a key corporate plan objective.
21. The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting on 21 November 2024, considered the recommendation of the Task and Finish group to remove the 10% minimum contribution. The Panel discussed the financial impact on both the Councils budget, and that of Hampshire County Council who have severe financial pressures, especially with the cost of supporting vulnerable people. It was noted that the District Council was having to sustain significant additional budget within the homelessness service, and had an overall financial deficit to address over the MTFP period in the region of £2.5m. The Panel also highlighted the additional support available to households, including the extension of the Household Support Fund for 2025/26 which provides targeted financial support with household bills to those struggling financially.
22. **The Panel recommend no change from the current scheme (retaining the 10% minimum contribution).**

## **B. Removal of the Band D cap**

23. The Group discussed the principle of capping any Council Tax Reduction to a Band D. This proposal that was subject to consultation affects 100 claims and consideration was given to the collection rates amongst this cohort and the impact where households are placed into properties of Band E and above or require larger property due to household size.
24. The financial cost of this proposal is to increase the level of support by approximately £33k per annum.
25. From the consultation 53% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal with 21% neither agreeing or disagreeing. The Group also considered the response from Hampshire County Council, which as above, expressed concerns about any changes that would make the scheme more generous and therefore impacting on their income. The Group discussed this response, and although sympathetic to Hampshire County Councils financial situation, on reflection considered that the scheme should be supporting our most vulnerable households; a key corporate plan objective, and recommended the removal of the cap.
26. **The Panel recommend removing the band D cap.**

## **C. The de-minimis rule**

27. The proposed change that was subject to consultation was to increase the current de-minimis amount from £1 to £2, whereby any reduction in entitlement by up to £2 will not affect entitlement, which will remain at the existing level. This is to reduce administration, multiple bills being produced and reduce paper and costs.
28. From the consultation 73% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal with 19% neither agreeing or disagreeing. The Group also considered the response from Hampshire County Council, who were supportive of this change to reduce administration and improve the scheme.
29. The financial cost of this proposal is to increase the level of support by £3k per annum, but there will be savings in terms of administration, paper and postage. The Group recommended this change.



30. **The Panel recommend increasing the de-minimis amount from £1 to £2.**

#### **D. Child care costs**

31. The proposed change that was subject to consultation was to align the treatment of child care costs with Universal Credit for all claims. Currently, those in continuous receipt of Council Tax Reduction from 31 March 2013 have a higher weekly disregard of child care from earnings in the assessment of entitlement, requiring monthly manual intervention. This change enables full automation and reduces administration.
32. From the consultation 66% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal with 24% neither agreeing or disagreeing. The Group also considered the response from Hampshire County Council, who were supportive of this change to reduce administration and improve the scheme.
33. The financial cost of this proposal is to reduce the level of support by £3k, which will affect approximately 42 claimants, although as claims migrate to Universal Credit some will actually be better off. There is the availability of the Exceptional Hardship Payment scheme to support those affected whereby any reduction in entitlement causes exceptional financial hardship. The Group recommended this change.
34. **The Panel recommend aligning child care costs with Universal Credit for all claims.**

#### **Consultation**

35. The Council has a duty to consult on any changes to the scheme. The Council actively undertook a consultation exercise over a 6-week period, from 21 August 2024 to 4 October 2024, advertising on the council's website, social media, residents' email, as well as by telephone, and contacted Hampshire County Council.
36. The Council received 225 responses. The Group considered the responses in their discussions before finalising their recommendations to the panel.

#### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Prosecutions policy**

37. The Group reviewed the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme Sanctions and Penalties policy, which provides details on dealing with fraud and error within the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Minor amendments were proposed, as there have been no changes to legislation, see Appendix 2.

**38. The Panel support the updated policy and recommend its approval and adoption with immediate effect.**

**Council Tax premiums**

39. The Council has approved two premiums from 1 April 2025, these being:

- reducing the length of time a 100% premium can apply for long term empty properties from 2 years to 1 year
- a 100% premium for properties which are furnished and periodically occupied, commonly referred to as “second homes”

40. Government have very recently provided legislation and accompanying guidance that stipulate specific exceptions where a premium cannot apply, some of which are time limited, whilst other exceptions are not, such as annexes that form part of a main dwelling, properties where year round occupation is restricted, or those living elsewhere in armed forces accommodation. The guidance and legislation allow local authorities to apply local discretion to their own schemes, should they so wish.

41. The Group considered three of the exceptions and whether to apply a local discretion, these being:

Class	Definition	Prescribed term
G	Dwellings being actively marketed for sale	12 months
H	Dwellings being actively marketed for let	12 months
M	Empty properties requiring or undergoing major repairs or structural alterations	12 months

42. Having considered the prescribed exceptions as above, and the Task and Finish Groups recommendation to apply local discretion to increase the exception period for Class G and M, the Panel considered the financial impact and that the prescribed period set by government is sufficient to encourage properties to be brought back into use.

43. Taxpayers, based on current known information, will be notified by letter of the forthcoming changes and to contact us should their circumstances change, or if an exception should be applied from 1 April 2025.
44. **The Panel recommended no local exceptions to Council Tax premiums.**

### **Corporate plan priorities**

45. The contents of this report support our key priorities of our Corporate Plan by supporting low-income households and encouraging properties to be brought back into use.

### **Options appraisal**

46. Details of the options and discussions are included in the paragraphs above.

### **Financial and resource implications**

47. The proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme were discussed with the Group, with the additional total support amounting to circa £30k per annum, equating to approximately £3k to the Council, although there would be savings in administration, such as officer time and postage to be considered. The summarised costings are:

Option B – Additional cost of £33k

Option C – Cost neutral

Option D – Reduction in cost of £3k

48. The changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme will reduce administration, which can be utilised elsewhere, including the administration of the new council tax premiums.

### **Legal implications**

49. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 provided for the introduction of the localisation of Council Tax support by making changes to the Local Government Finance Act 1992. These require that:

- For each financial year, each billing authority must consider whether to revise its scheme or replace it with another scheme

50. In accordance with legislation, the Council has already made a determination at least one year prior to the financial year to which

the premiums will apply. The Council must apply the legislated exceptions to the premiums where conditions are met.

### **Risk assessment**

51. There are no risk assessments required.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

52. There are no significant environmental or climate and nature implications arising from this report, although the recommendations will reduce the use of paper as fewer notices and bills will be issued.

### **Equalities implications**

53. Our Council Tax Reduction scheme continues to support those on a low income and protects vulnerable households and proactive steps are taken to promote and maximise take-up, as well as to provide additional advice and support where appropriate. The proposed changes to the scheme will provide additional support to those on a low income.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

54. There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

### **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

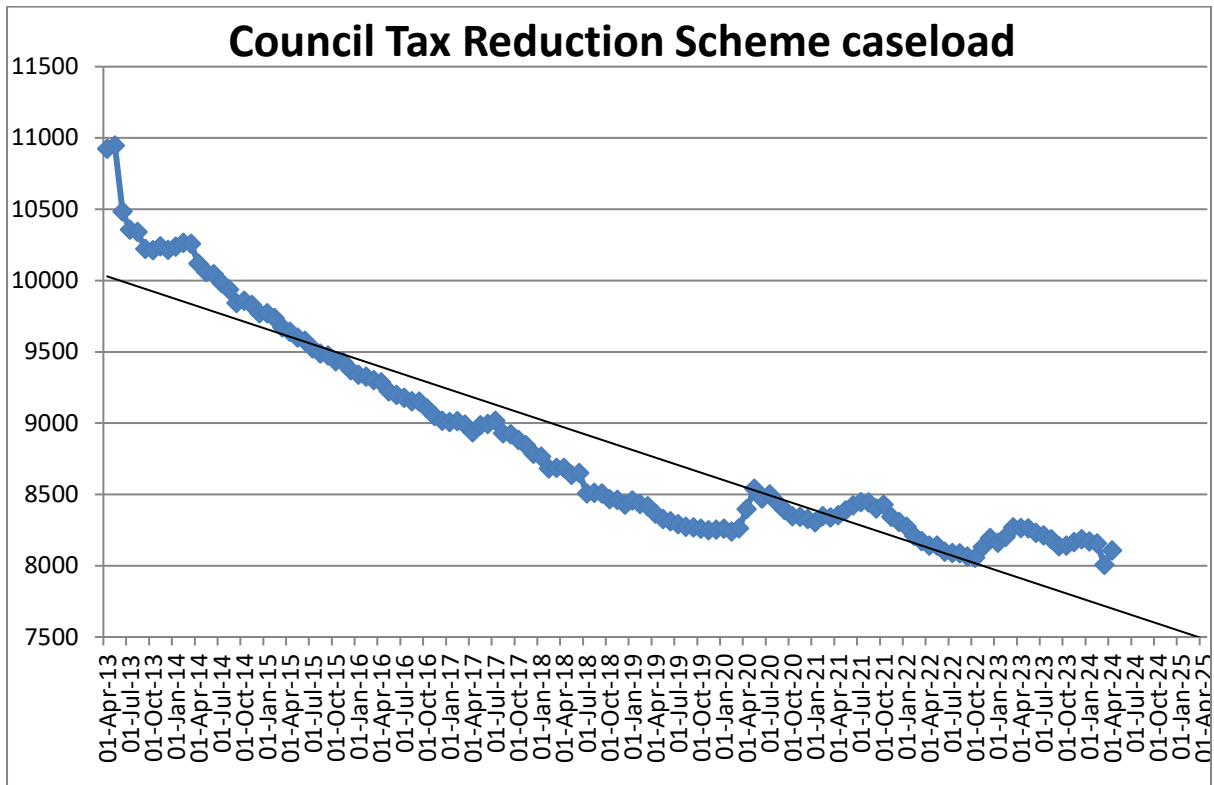
55. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising from this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Caseload trends  
Appendix 2 – The Council Tax  
Reduction Scheme Sanctions and  
Penalties Policy

### **Background Papers:**

## Appendix 1 – Caseload Trends





## Council Tax Reduction Scheme Prosecutions and Penalties Policy

Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services

November 2024

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 New Forest District Council (“The Council”) is responsible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and therefore, has a duty to prevent and detect fraudulent claims as part of its commitment to protecting public funds. The Councils Fraud Policy makes it clear that fraud in any form will not be tolerated and the Council is committed to applying the most appropriate sanctions to those it believes have obtained Council Tax Reduction fraudulently.

## **2. Aims**

2.1 The aim of the policy is to:

- provide proportionate but robust sanctions to deal with those suspected of fraud.
- deter those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction from committing fraud
- deter those who have committed fraud from re-offending
- underpin good governance in accordance with the Councils Fraud Policy

## **3. Legislation**

3.1 This policy has regard to the following legislation:

- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013

3.2 There are two main offences under this legislation:

- False representation and
- Failure to notify a change of circumstances

3.4 False Representation

3.5 Regulation 7 creates an offence where a person makes a statement or representation which he or she knows to be false for the purpose of obtaining a reduction under a Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

3.6 It is also an offence for a person to provide or knowingly cause or allow to be provided a document or information which that person knows to be false in a material particular.

3.7 Failure to notify a change in circumstances

3.8 Regulation 8 creates an offence where there has been a change of circumstances which a person knows affects their entitlement to a reduction, and the person fails to give notice of the change as required by the authority’s scheme.

3.9 Regulation 11 of the Council Tax Reduction schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013, enables an authority to invite a person

to agree to pay a penalty as an alternative to prosecution for an offence relating to the award of a reduction under a Council Tax Reduction Scheme which a person was not entitled to, or an offence relating to an act or omission which could have resulted in such an award.

3.10 Regulations 12 and 13 of the Council Tax Reduction schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013, enable a billing authority to impose a penalty of £70 on a person in circumstances such as where a person negligently:

- Makes an incorrect statement in connection with an application for a reduction under a council tax reduction scheme or
- Where a person fails to notify a change of circumstances when required to do so under a scheme.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

4.1 All staff within the Revenues and Benefits Service have a responsibility to ensure accuracy of awards, procedures are followed and referrals made to the Corporate Fraud and Compliance Officer where appropriate. Managers are responsible for maintaining procedures and controls and compliance.

#### **5. Investigation for suspected fraud**

5.1 If the council suspects a person of giving them wrong or misleading information, they may be investigated to establish if any fraud offences have occurred. The council could ask them to attend an interview known as an Interview Under Caution if we suspect an offence may have occurred. The council will give at least 5 days' notice for the interview and the person affected may bring someone to accompany them which could include a legal representative. The Council will decide who can attend the interview.

5.2 Following the Interview under caution a decision will be made as to the next steps, which could include prosecution, an Administration Penalty or a £70 penalty as detailed below. Each case will be looked at on an individual basis.

5.3 Legal proceedings can start at any time within the period of twelve months from the alleged commission of the offence.

#### **6. Council Tax Reduction (CTR) – Penalties and Prosecution**

6.1 All sanction decisions will be consistent, balanced and fair and relate to the degree and nature of the offence. The Council will decide the degree or type of sanction to be used in each individual case. In coming to any decision many factors will be taken into account including the seriousness of the offence, the value of the overpayment, the length of the fraud, the vulnerability of the claimant, and the health and age of the claimant.



## **6.2 Written warnings**

6.2.1. A written warning may be issued where there has been an offence and to warn about future behaviour so as to act as a deterrent. A written warning may be issued where:

- The person has not previously been investigated for a Council Tax Reduction scheme offence
- The amount of any Council Tax Reduction where there is no entitlement is less than £1,000

6.2.2 The Council will take into consideration the following factors when deciding if a written warning is appropriate:

- The persons wilfulness in committing the offence
- The persons attitude, for example if regret is expressed for their actions
- Any other mitigating factor

## **6.3. Administrative Penalties**

6.3.1 If the Council is satisfied that an offence has occurred we may ask the person to pay a penalty instead of prosecuting them. If the penalty is paid, they will not be prosecuted for that offence. Any penalty paid will be in addition to repaying any Council Tax Reduction they were not entitled to.

6.3.2 The penalty will be 50% of the Council Tax Reduction awarded which the claimant was not entitled to, with a minimum payment of £100 and a maximum payment of £1,000. If a person did not actually get any Council Tax Reduction, for example the person made a false claim, the penalty will be £100.

6.3.3 An Administrative Penalty is appropriate when:

- The Department for Work and Pensions have administered an Administrative Penalty for Housing Benefit which the claimant has accepted.
- The case is suitable for prosecution and satisfies the council's prosecution procedures:
- The case is not so serious that the first option should be prosecution;
- The excess payment of Council Tax Reduction that the person was not entitled to is less than £3,000.00
- The customer has not received a sanction for a Council Tax reduction offence in previous 5 years (the scheme started in April 2013)

6.3.4 There is no requirement for the person to admit the offence before an Administrative Penalty can be offered.

6.3.5 An Administrative Penalty is not appropriate when:

- The person has been convicted of Council Tax Reduction fraud in past 5 years (the scheme started in April 2013)

- The person has accepted an Administrative Penalty in the previous 5 years
  - the fraud continued over a long period;
  - the fraud was calculated and deliberate, for example the person planned it from the outset by making a false statement on a new or repeat claim form. In these cases, the full circumstances of the case will be considered to enable a balanced judgement to be made to decide whether an Administrative Penalty or prosecution of the person is appropriate.
- 6.3.6 A person will be requested to attend an interview if the Council believes an offence may have occurred. The interview will be conducted by an authorised officer from the council. The council will give at least 5 days' notice for the interview and the person affected may bring someone to accompany them which could include a legal representative
- 6.3.7 Where a person does not attend an interview and does not contact the office within 5 working days to provide an explanation and arrange a further appointment, a final appointment will be arranged with them. If the person fails to attend this appointment, the Council will consider the case for prosecution.
- 6.3.8 If the person accepts an Administrative Penalty the council will notify the person in writing. In accordance with legislation, the person has 14 days, known as the *cooling off period*, to decline the Administrative Penalty. Where the person accepts the Administrative Penalty they are required to sign and return the *agreement form*. Where a person withdraws their agreement, which must be received in writing, the case will be submitted for prosecution. If after 14 days, the person has made no contact with the council, the Administrative Penalty will be deemed as accepted.
- 6.3.9 If a person declines to accept the Administrative Penalty, the case will be considered for prosecution. The court will be informed that the person refused to accept an Administrative Penalty.

#### **6.4 Paying the Administrative Penalty**

- 6.4.1 An invoice will be issued for the recovery of the Administrative Penalty and a payment plan can be arranged for the payment of the invoice. When agreeing the payment plan the council will consider affordability. Where the penalty is not paid, the Sundry Income Team will recover the debt by any means available to them, this may include using Collection Agents or court
- 6.4.2 If, after imposing an Administrative Penalty, the council revises the amount of Council Tax Reduction that the person is not entitled to, the council will revise the Administrative Penalty. Where the amount is lower, the person will be repaid any excess sums paid. Where the Administrative Penalty is to be paid in instalments, this should ensure that full payment is to be paid no later than one month before the end of the period to issue a prosecution, so that consideration should be given to whether a prosecution should be issued if the payments are not made.

## **6.5 Prosecution**

- 6.5.1 Prosecution is the ultimate sanction available to the Council and will be considered. The matter will be referred to Legal Services to determine whether prosecution is in the public interest, whether the claimant is fit to be prosecuted and whether the evidence has passed the evidential sufficiency test i.e. the Council must be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to provide a 'realistic prospect of conviction' against every defendant on every charge and has been obtained in an appropriate manner.

## **7. Giving false information to get Council Tax Reduction**

- 7.1 The council may prosecute a person if they give wrong information when they apply for Council Tax Reduction.
- 7.2 The council may prosecute if the person claiming deliberately gave wrong information when they applied for Council Tax Reduction. The council might also prosecute a person if they encouraged a claimant to give wrong information on their behalf. For example, a partner, member of the household or someone who assisted in completing a document might be prosecuted if they told the council that they were not working or had no savings when they knew this to be false.

## **8. Failure to notify a change in your circumstances**

- 8.1 If someone is already getting Council Tax Reduction, they might be prosecuted if they do not notify the council about any change in their circumstances which they know affects their entitlement to Council Tax Reduction or the amount they receive. For example, the person should notify the council if they start a job or if a partner comes to live with them. They need to do this promptly. This means notifying the council within 21 days of the date of change, or as soon as possible if unable to notify within 21 days.
- 8.2 A person can also be prosecuted if they deliberately encourage or allow someone else not to notify changes affecting their Council Tax Reduction entitlement.
- 8.3 Paying a penalty for giving wrong information or for not notifying the council about a change in circumstances**
- 8.4 The council will not always prosecute when a person gives wrong information or fails to notify a change in circumstances. Instead, they may ask the customer to pay a £70.00 penalty. The council may ask a person to do this if they negligently make an incorrect statement in connection with an application or because a person did not notify the Council about a change in their circumstances which they should have known would affect their Council Tax Reduction award.
- 8.5 The council will not ask for the £70.00 penalty to be paid if a person is being prosecuted or if they are being asked to pay an Administrative Penalty as an alternative to being prosecuted.

- 8.6 A person may not have to pay a penalty if they have taken reasonable steps to correct their mistake. Taking reasonable steps might include contacting the council as soon as they realise they had made a mistake.
- 8.7 The £70.00 penalty is in addition to repaying any Council Tax Reduction the customer should not have received.
- 8.8 There is no appeal right of appeal against the penalty. However, if a person successfully appeals a decision about their Council Tax Reduction, which reduces the overpayment to zero, the council may withdraw the penalty.
- 8.9 An invoice will be issued for the recovery of the Penalty and a payment plan can be arranged for the payment of the invoice. Where the penalty is not paid, the Income Recovery Team will recover the debt by any means available to them.

## **9. Joint working with the Department for Work and Pensions**

- 9.1 Joint working is a collaborative approach to fraud investigations, including information and intelligence sharing and two-way communication leading to a joint interview under caution, a single prosecution file preparation, a single prosecution or other outcome. The Council will proactively work with the Department for Work and Pensions to investigate where fraud has allegedly been committed and where evidence is sufficient to warrant further prosecutions.

## **10. Communicating the policy**

- 10.1 The council will publish this policy on the website and refer to it on decision notices to all recipients of a Council Tax Reduction and on application forms.
- 10.2 Staff will undertake annual fraud awareness training and fraud awareness will be continually promoted.

## **11. Performance Monitoring**

- 11.1 The council will monitor:
- the number and type of penalty
  - payments received
  - the number of appeals and the outcome
- 11.2 The council will use this information to review procedures and policy where appropriate.

## **12. Policy Review**

- 12.1 The council will review this policy every three years or earlier if there is new legislation.

**Cabinet – 4 December 2024**

**Council Tax 2025/26 – Setting the Tax Base**

Purpose	For decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Council sets the tax base each year being an annual calculation which sets out the estimated number of chargeable dwellings in the district, expressed at the number of Band D equivalents. This report provides details of the tax base for 2025/26 and the calculation process.
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. the calculation of the tax base for the year 2025/26 of 73,355.0</b></li> <li><b>2. pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by this Council as its council tax base for the year 2025/26 as detailed in paragraph 13.</b></li> </ol>
Reasons for recommendation	To approve the tax base for determining budget setting and the amount of council tax to levy.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance & Corporate
Strategic Director	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation
Officer Contact	<p>Ryan Stevens  Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services  02380 285693  <a href="mailto:Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk">Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

## **Introduction and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to enable Members to approve the tax base for 2025/26.
2. Setting the tax base is an integral part of the Budget setting process and the determination of Council Tax levels. The tax base must be calculated in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, and the calculation has to be set between 1 December and 31 January. The approved tax base must be notified to the County Council by 31 January.
3. The tax base is a yearly calculation and represents the estimated number of dwellings to which council tax is chargeable and is set to a "Band D equivalent" figure. The Valuation Office Agency allocate each domestic dwelling into one of eight valuation bands (A to H) for council tax purposes, with different proportions of tax payable by each band.
4. The tax base is the estimated number of dwellings in the District, modified to take account of the different proportions payable, and any premiums, discounts, exemptions and other reductions. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes an assumption of additional Council Tax collection based on an expectation of annual growth in the Tax Base, pursuant to the Local Plan and required housing growth targets.
5. The calculation of the tax base for tax setting also includes an estimated allowance for non-collection.
6. Separate calculations are required of the tax base for each Parish.

## **The Calculation Process**

7. The starting point is the number of properties in each council tax valuation band, which is then adjusted to allow for estimates of:
  - The number of properties estimated as being exempt as not all properties are liable to pay council tax
  - The number of demolished properties due to be removed from the valuation list
  - The number of properties that have a disabled band reduction, where eligible properties are treated as being in the band below the one in which it is actually valued (for dwellings in Band A they pay 5/9th of the Band D charge)
  - The number of properties that have a 25% or 50% discount (i.e. single person discount)

- The number of properties where a 100% discount will apply for one month only, due to being unoccupied and unfurnished ('void') dwellings.
  - Known growth where a completion notice has been issued for a property but a valuation banding has not been received from the Valuation Office Agency
  - The estimated number of properties subject to an Empty Homes Premium, where the period of time for the 100% premium is reducing from 2 years to 1 year from the 1 April 2025
  - The estimated number of properties subject to the Second Homes Premium of 100%, which is being introduced from 1 April 2025. This is largely attributable for the increase in the overall tax base for 2025/26.
8. The resultant net number of dwellings is multiplied by the relevant proportions to ascertain equivalent Band D properties. The relevant proportions are shown in Appendix 1.
  9. The Council Tax Reduction scheme (CTR) operates as a discount on claimants Council Tax bills to support households on a low income with paying their council tax bills, with the effect of reducing the council tax base. The value of CTR awarded to pensioners and those of working age is dependent on their circumstances and are aggregated to arrive at the total council tax reduction. These values are converted into the tax base and band D equivalents. The number of recipients remains constant, at approximately 8,000, and the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2025/26 will affect the overall figure but cannot be included in this years calculation.
  10. The next step of the calculation is to assess the likely in-year collection rate and thereby make an appropriate allowance for non-collection. The estimated in-year collection rate for 2025/26 is 98.5%, which takes into consideration our consistent record of good performance in Council Tax collection in recent years, the impact of the cost of living, and is considered prudent. Contributions in lieu for Ministry of Defence dwellings are then added. A summary of the whole calculation process is shown in Appendix 3.
  11. The figures used in the calculation process are based on latest actuals at a given date. Appendix 2 shows 2025/26 tax base compared to 2024/25.
  12. Although there may be some growth in the tax base in the forthcoming year, for example new developments, it is advisable to take a prudent approach. If dwellings are improved and/or extended, council tax valuation bandings only normally change after a subsequent sale or the granting of a lease of 7 years or more.

## Tax base for 2025/26

13. The tax base for 2025/26 is 73,355.0. For each Town and Parish the tax base is as follows:

<b>TOWN/PARISH</b>	<b>TAX BASE 25/26</b>
Ashurst & Colbury	952.2
Beaulieu	541.6
Boldre	1,094.5
Bramshaw	347.4
Bransgore	1,864.5
Breamore	189.4
Brockenhurst	1,969.8
Burley	830.5
Copythorne	1,236.9
Damerham	252.1
Denny Lodge	162.0
East Boldre	389.6
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	650.7
Exbury & Lepe	121.4
Fawley	4,625.6
Fordingbridge	2,576.9
Godshill	230.2
Hale	269.5
Hordle	2,472.1
Hyde	533.9
Hythe & Dibden	7,511.6
Lymington & Pennington	7,716.4
Lyndhurst	1,507.8
Marchwood	2,073.2
Martin	197.9
Milford on Sea	3,031.5
Minstead	384.0
Netley Marsh	837.4
New Milton	10,741
Ringwood	5,507.3
Rockbourne	167.8
Sandleheath	302.1
Sopley	406.7
Sway	1,752.6
Totton & Eling	9,542.8
Whitsbury	107.1
Woodgreen	257.0
<b>Whole District</b>	<b>73,355.0</b>



14. The overall Band D equivalent **net dwellings** has increased by 98.3 (0.13%) from 2024/25 to 2025/26, the higher this growth in dwelling numbers the higher the tax base and consequent council tax yield. This level of net growth is below the Council's MTFP forecast assumption, and so will result in lower Council Tax growth for 2025/26 than originally anticipated.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

15. The setting of the tax base is a legal requirement and supports our corporate priorities by ensuring we are financially responsible and manage our finances prudently.

### **Options appraisal**

16. The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 set out the requirements for the calculation of the council tax base for tax setting purposes. Therefore, there are no alternative options.

### **Financial and resource implications**

17. The calculation of the tax base is a key part of the annual budget cycle and the Council needs to determine the council tax base for the financial year 2025/26 to enable the required level of Council Tax to be calculated for that year.
18. The tax base figures provided within Appendix 2 of this report have been communicated to town and parish councils so that they can start to factor these into their budget setting process.
19. Any Council Tax surplus/deficit on the Collection Fund will be shared between the Principal Authorities, pro rata to the demand/precept on the fund for the year concerned.

### **Legal implications**

20. There is a legal requirement to set the tax base. Members should be aware of the provisions of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which applies to members where
  - (a) they are present at a meeting of the Council, the Cabinet or a Committee and at the time of the meeting an amount of Council Tax is payable by them and has remained unpaid for at least two months; and
  - (b) any budget or Council Tax calculation, or recommendation or decision which might affect the making of any such calculation, is the subject of consideration at the meeting.
21. In these circumstances, any such members shall at the meeting and as soon as practicable after its commencement disclose the fact that

Section 106 applies to them and shall not vote on any question concerning the matter in (b) above. It should be noted that such members are not debarred from speaking on these matters. Failure to comply with these requirements constitutes a criminal offence, unless any such members can prove they did not know that Section 106 applied to them at the time of the meeting or that the matter in question was the subject of consideration at the meeting

### **Risk assessment**

22. There are no risk assessments required.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

23. There are no environmental or climate and nature implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities implications**

24. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

25. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

26. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising from this report.

### **Conclusion**

27. The setting of the tax base is a legal requirement and the regulations require that the tax base be formally approved for each parish/town Council area, with the calculations being approved through a resolution by the Council.

28. A prudent approach is taken in forecasting the tax base. Clearly, there is an obligation to ensure that sufficient funds are realised to meet the Council's expenditure. A realistic collection rate has to be determined. It is important that the tax base is not overstated, as any shortfall will result in interest costs falling on the Council's General Fund.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Valuation Bands  
Appendix 2 – Tax Base comparison  
Appendix 3 – Calculation summary

### **Background Papers:**

The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012

## VALUATION BANDS

All dwellings have been valued by the Valuation Office Agency, based on property prices at April 1991. There are eight valuation bands and each dwelling has been placed into one of these bands according to its assessed value at that time. Band A is the lowest. The higher the band, the higher the council tax charge will be. See the table below:-

BAND	RANGE OF VALUES	PROPORTION
A	Up to£40,000	£1.00
B	Over£40,000 -£52,000	£1.17
C	Over£52,000 -£68,000	£1.33
D	Over£68,000 -£88,000	£1.50
E	Over£88,000 -£120,000	£1.83
F	Over£120,000 -£160,000	£2.17
G	Over£160,000 -£320,000	£2.50
H	Over£320,000	£3.00

For every £1.00 of Council Tax for a band 'A' property, a band 'B' property will be charged £1.17 - and so on. Any discounts and reductions would make the difference less than this.

**TAX BASES FOR 2025/26 COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR 2024/25**

<b>PARISH/TOWN</b>	<b>TAX BASE 24/25</b>	<b>TAX BASE 25/26</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
Ashurst & Colbury	939.9	952.2	12.3
Beaulieu	511.9	541.6	29.7
Boldre	1,067	1,094.50	27.5
Bramshaw	337.8	347.4	9.6
Bransgore	1,846.8	1,864.50	17.7
Breamore	185.7	189.4	3.7
Brockenhurst	1,911.1	1,969.80	58.7
Burley	809.2	830.5	21.3
Copythorne	1,235.7	1,236.90	1.2
Damerham	248.3	252.1	3.8
Denny Lodge	159.2	162	2.8
East Boldre	384.4	389.6	5.2
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	632	650.7	18.7
Exbury & Lepe	116.3	121.4	5.1
Fawley	4,634.5	4,625.60	-8.9
Fordingbridge	2,423.8	2,576.90	153.1
Godshill	225	230.2	5.2
Hale	267.7	269.5	1.8
Hordle	2,434.2	2,472.10	37.9
Hyde	519.8	533.9	14.1
Hythe & Dibden	7,482.5	7,511.60	29.1
Lymington & Pennington	7,529.6	7,716.40	186.8
Lyndhurst	1,478.5	1,507.80	29.3
Marchwood	2,075.2	2,073.20	-2
Martin	200.3	197.9	-2.4
Milford on Sea	2,938.7	3,031.50	92.8
Minstead	374.4	384	9.6
Netley Marsh	818	837.4	19.4
New Milton	10,619.4	10,741	121.6
Ringwood	5,501.6	5,507.30	5.7
Rockbourne	169.9	167.8	-2.1
Sandleheath	299.6	302.1	2.5
Sopley	392.4	406.7	14.3
Sway	1,731.8	1,752.60	20.8
Totton & Eling	9,511.7	9,542.80	31.1
Whitsbury	104.7	107.1	2.4
Woodgreen	252.9	257	4.1
<b>Whole District</b>	<b>72,371.5</b>	<b>73,355.0</b>	<b>983.50</b>

**Appendix 3**

	<b>SUMMARY</b>									
	DIS. A	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C	BAND D	BAND E	BAND F	BAND G	BAND H	TOTAL
Total no. of dwellings	0	7290	12239	18264	19438	13677	7161	4689	624	83382
Active exemptions	0	382	248	318	441	203	94	64	6	1756
Demolished and to be removed	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
No. dwellings subject to disabled reduction	0	33	86	183	192	173	75	60	25	827
No. of disabled band reductions	33	86	183	192	173	75	60	25	0	827
No. of dwellings adjusted for disabled relief	33	6960	12088	17955	18978	13376	7052	4590	593	81625
No. entitled to 25% discount	14	4164	5546	6093	5799	3259	1435	774	80	27164
No. of dwellings entitled to 50% discount		176	41	25	37	29	38	39	6	391
No. entitled to 100% discount		41	38	30	22	13	15	2	1	162
Total discounts	14	4562.88	5655.56	6160.52	5878.48	3325.08	1516.1	852.68	92.34	28057.64
Discount deduction	3.5	1140.72	1413.89	1540.13	1469.62	831.27	379.03	213.17	23.09	7014.42
Net dwellings	29.5	5819.28	10674.1	16414.9	17508.4	12544.73	6672.97	4376.83	569.91	74610.58
No. subject to a premium (100%)	0	5	11	14	8	8	4	2	0	52
No. subject to a premium (200%)	0	19	4	12	1	2	8	0	0	46
No. subject to a premium (300%)	0	5	2	0	1	3	0	3	0	14
Adjusted net dwellings	29.5	5877.28	10699.1	16452.9	17521.4	12565.73	6692.97	4387.83	569.91	74796.58
Band D equivalents	16.4	3918.2	8321.5	14624.8	17521.4	15358.1	9667.6	7313.1	1139.8	77880.9
Reduction due to CTR band D equiv	5.42	923.47	1406.11	1320.78	594.73	244.74	62.08	17.02	2.18	4576.53
Adjusted band d equivalents	11.18	2994.72	6915.42	13303.99	16966.65	15113.37	9605.54	7296.03	1137.64	73344.5
Empty homes premium	0	14.8	11.6	18.4	26	16.4	10.4	9.6	0.8	108.0
Second homes premium	0	48.8	53.2	98.4	170.8	121.6	95.6	82.8	16.8	688.0
Adjusted band D equivalents	11.18	3037.33	6965.8	13407.8	17164	15282.04	9758.71	7450.18	1172.82	74249.95
									98.5% Collection rate	73136.2
									Contributions in lieu	218.8
									Tax base	73355.0

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**Cabinet – 4 December 2024****Leisure – Update and Proposed Fees and Charges 2025**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the latest update regarding the Council's Leisure partner, Freedom Leisure, including proposals to the ongoing pricing structure.</li> <li>Seeks Council approval for changes to the pricing structure which required such approval in line with the terms of the contract with Freedom Leisure</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p><b>Cabinet is asked to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>note the operational update from the Council's leisure partner</b></li> <li><b>recommend that Council approves the proposed increases in fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1.</b></li> </ol>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>To ensure greater understanding of the current position regarding delivery of the Council's leisure service.</p> <p>To comply with the contractual arrangements relating to price increases.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	<p>Councillor Jeremy Heron - Finance &amp; Corporate</p> <p>Councillor Dan Poole – Community Safety &amp; Wellbeing</p>
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	<p>Paul Whittles</p> <p>Assistant Director - Finance</p> <p>02380 285766</p> <p>paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

## **Introduction and background**

1. The Council entered into an agreement in July 2021 for Freedom Leisure to manage and operate the Council's five leisure facilities at Applemore, Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood, and Totton.
2. As part of this contract Freedom Leisure has the ability to make most operational and business decisions. However, there are a number of contractual clauses which require additional approval by the Council for specific changes.
3. Freedom Leisure's latest annual report as presented to the Housing & Communities overview and scrutiny panel in September can be found here [New Forest Leisure Partnership Annual Report](#).
4. Appendix 1 provided by Freedom Leisure sets out the case for their fee proposals and includes the schedule of proposed fees for consideration of the Cabinet and ultimately approval by Council.

## **Leisure Fees and Charges**

5. The Council's Leisure partner, Freedom Leisure, sets fees in line with the contractual agreement. As part of this any increases greater than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) require Council approval.
6. Due to cost pressures particularly associated with pay and energy, an increase in fees greater than CPI has been proposed by Freedom Leisure as detailed in Appendix 1 and form part of this paper's recommendations. It is the responsibility of Freedom Leisure as the Council's operator to respond to external factors and set a pricing strategy that seeks to maximise their income, whilst continuing to support long-standing concessions previously offered by the Council.
7. This price increase will have a neutral impact on the Council's financial position, but by the Council supporting appropriate price increases to maintain a healthy viable business model, its Medium Term financial interests are protected.

## **Corporate plan priorities**

8. Having high quality, well-funded, leisure services underpinned by strong, successful partnership working relationships supports the corporate objective of empowering residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.
9. Supporting the Council's partners' financial sustainability ensures the Council are being financially responsible by protecting the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan from any unplanned impact.



## **Options appraisal**

10. The Council could choose to not to approve the proposed fee increases which would lead to a funding shortfall within the Freedom Leisure budget necessitating the need to potentially cut back services, staffing levels or opening hours to enable the business to operate within the constraints their funding allows.
11. In the worst-case scenario (albeit highly unlikely at this time), Freedom Leisure may need to withdraw from the contract altogether, effectively handing back leisure operations to the Council with all the financial and operational issues associated with it, including the additional costs and challenges currently being faced by the operator.

## **Consultation undertaken**

12. Internal consultation between finance officers, budget holders, partners and the portfolio holder has informed the contents of the report.

## **Financial and resource implications**

13. All financial and resource implications are contained within the body of the report.

## **Legal implications**

14. Where Freedom Leisure seek to increase specific prices above CPI the contract provides that this first requires Council approval before such increases can be implemented. As the proposed price increases are above CPI, they need to be considered by the Council which has the decision as to whether to approve. These charges are the ones set out in Appendix 1.
15. In addition, some increases are limited by the contract to an increase in line with CPI and no further. These charges can be made without Council approval however consultation with the Council is required. These are the charges set out in Appendix 1 and although Council does not have the final decision on this element it is entitled to provide comments which should be taken into account by Freedom Leisure.

## **Risk assessment**

16. None at this stage, although the options appraisal section highlights some risks that could crystallise, should the recommendation not be approved.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

17. None at this stage, although it is worthy to note that the Council's Medium-Term Financial Planning will need to seek to support the delivery of the Council's Climate and Nature Action Plan.

### **Equalities implications**

18. Considered as part of Appendix 1.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

19. There are no direct implications regarding crime and disorder as a result of this report.

### **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

20. There are no direct implications regarding data protection, information governance or ICT as a result of this report.

#### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Freedom Leisure Fees and Charges Proposal

#### **Background Papers:**

[New Forest Leisure Partnership Annual Report](#)



## **Fees & Charges proposal**

*Pricing From:*

**Core pricing:** Price Increase from February 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025



## Background

As we approach the end of 2024, we would like to begin preparations for the annual review of fees and charges, with all core pricing from February 2025.

Historically, our approach has been to review the contractual pricing terms and adjust fees based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage, as outlined in the agreement. However, in recent years, we have adopted a more flexible approach to pricing to better account for macroeconomic conditions, particularly the significant rise in energy and workforce costs.

We have been actively engaged in discussions with you to ensure that customer pricing reflects the inflationary pressures and market forces that are beyond our control. This departure from the traditional pricing model allows us to respond more effectively to changing circumstances.

To maintain this transparency, we will continue to highlight any exceptional macroeconomic pressures that may impact our operations and pricing.

## Increased People Costs

We are a people-led organisation. Our purpose to improve lives through leisure is predicated on our colleagues supporting local communities to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing. We invest heavily in our workforce, employing over 400 people; our people costs are our single biggest cost, representing over 55% of our cost base. Despite the current low CPI inflation rate of 1.7% in November, high wage growth continues above 5% (Fig. 1) and has been as high as 8% in the last year - which more accurately reflects our internal increased people costs we have absorbed. With a further projected 6.7% increase for over 21s, 16.3% for 18-20-year Olds and 18% for 16-17-year olds, in National Living Wage in April 2025 (Fig. 2), and a forecast 3% increase due to the recent budget announcement to increase National Insurance, we need to reflect our rising cost base in customer pricing.

Figure 1: Wage Growth Jan 2023 – July 2023 Source ONS

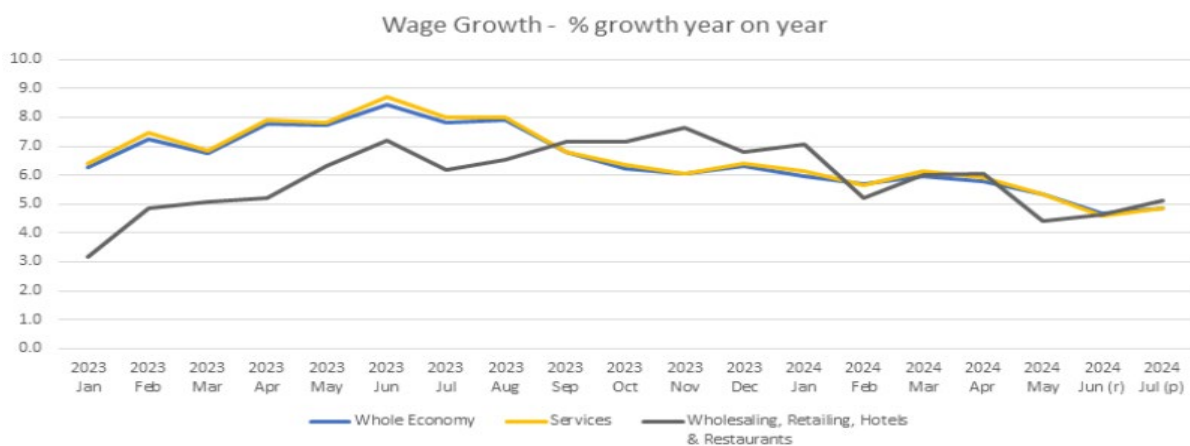
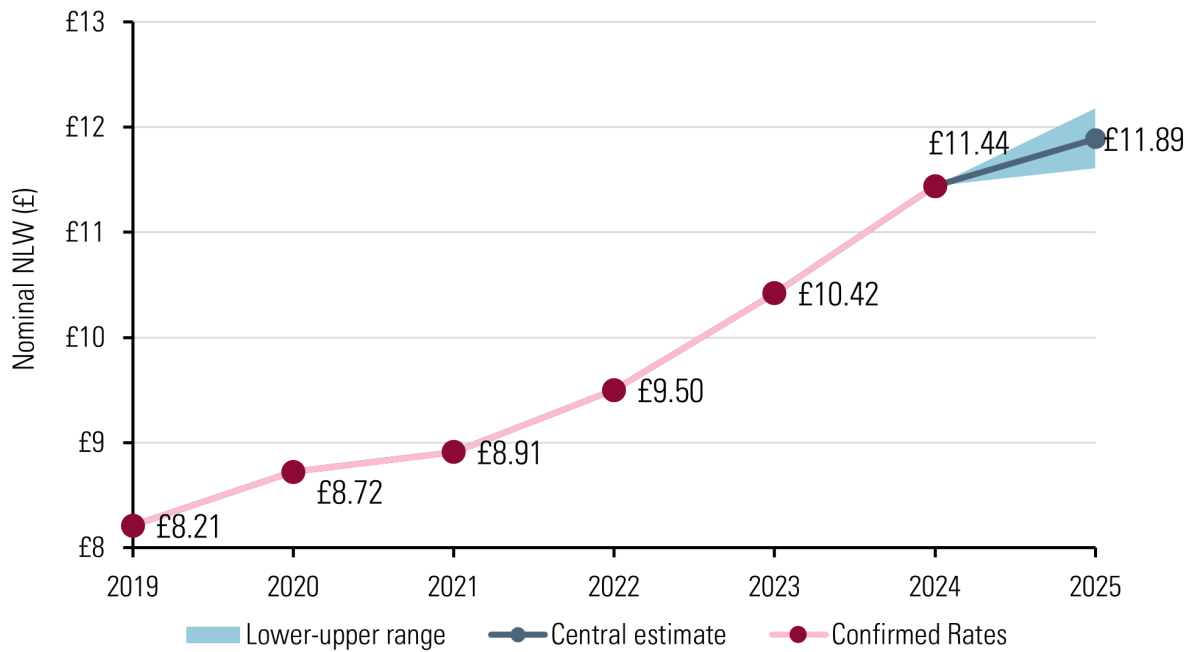


Figure 2: Actual and projected National Living Wage rates, 2019-2025



### Increased Energy Costs

The second largest cost item we face are energy costs, and whilst we have worked hard in recent years to significantly reduce our energy consumption, we must continue to acknowledge that due to much higher market rates, our energy costs have more than doubled in recent years, with energy costs now representing nearly 15% of our overall cost base.

### Pricing Approach

Based on the above factors, and in spite of continued efforts exploring new income streams and cost saving measures, the current contractual annual CPI% pricing approach will not mitigate against the cost pressures.

There is a strong case present for above-contractual increases due to the significant wage inflation pressures on our people-led services leading to a deterioration in current customer service and experience levels. Following will be a templated document that outlines our fees & charges increase proposal.

**Equality Impact: We will offer a full concessionary program providing equality, diversity and cohesion.**

**We will continue to offer the current concessionary rates as set out below:**

<b>Leisure Centres</b>	
<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>	<p><b><u>Advance 25 - up to 25 % reduction on fees and charges (Memberships and Pay as you go)</u></b></p> <p>Juniors (under 18), Individuals in receipt of State Pension, Full-Time Students.</p> <p>Teen Active and Senior Active.</p> <p>Senior Membership.</p> <p>Concessionary.</p> <p>Under 25's on the following: Modern Apprenticeships, NVQ Training Schemes and Life Skills Training.</p> <p>Corporate Membership.</p>
	<p><b><u>Advance 50 - up to 50 % reduction on fees and charges (Pay as you go only)</u></b></p> <p>Carer's Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Council Tax Benefit (not discount schemes), Employment &amp; Support Allowance, Foster Carers and Children, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Guaranteed Credits, Working Tax Credit, kindship carers, care leavers, looked after children and independent looked after children.</p>

- Lymington Health & Leisure
- New Milton Health & Leisure
- Applemore Health & Leisure
- Ringwood Health & Leisure
- Totton Health & Leisure

## **The negative impacts if FL New Forest were unsuccessful with the price rises application**

- Employment would be reduced causing an impact to the Teams social value
- Current customer service and experience levels
- Forward membership growth and retention plan
- Capital Projects and investment
- Joint projects with the partners (School)
- Retention plans to introduce reward schemes (creating more motivation around members staying with us)
- Reduced time table and programme across all sites in group exercise, swimming and LTS.
- Our Gym experience enhancement aimed
- Impact to social value and our delivery of Healthy Communities programs
- Environmental Net Zero strategy and current plans may not be delivered
- Repair and maintenance work not completed
- Our New Forest wider Brand reputation would be harmed moving forward
- Current recovery deficit - surplus
- Impact on the health and wellbeing of the New Forest population
- Impact on the organization's actions in the community and environment
- Impact on the health and wellbeing of the New Forest diverse population

## Core Pricing – Increase effective February 2025

- Average % increase across all Direct Debit Memberships is 6.1%.
- The highest monthly % increase is student DD, which is an increase of £3.50.
- The lowest increase is the corporate membership 3.1%, which is an increase of £1.40.

<b>Fitness Direct</b>	<b>Current Price</b>	<b>Proposed Price</b>	<b>Price Variance</b>	<b>Price Variance</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
Single Peak DD	£56.00	£58.00	£2.00	3.6%
Senior DD	£44.00	£47.00	£3.00	6.8%
Off Peak DD NLS	£44.00	£45.00	£1.00	2.3%
Family Peak DD NLS	£117.40	£117.40	£0.00	0.0%
Student DD	£35.00	£38.50	£3.50	10.0%
Concessionary DD	£44.00	£47.00	£3.00	6.8%
Single Corporate DD	£45.00	£46.40	£1.40	3.1%
Single NFDC Corporate DD	£33.00	£35.00	£2.00	6.1%
Funded 3M Student	£105.00	£120.00	£15.00	14.3%
<b>Swim Direct</b>				
Swim DD	£37.00	£40.00	£3.00	8.1%
Swim DD 65yrs+	£30.00	£32.00	£2.00	6.7%
<b>Gym Direct Ringwood</b>				
Gym DD RHL NLS	£45.00	£47.00	£2.00	4.4%
<b>Gym Direct Totton</b>				
Gym DD THL NLS	£45.00	£47.00	£2.00	4.4%
<b>Gym Direct</b>				
Gym DD	£45.00	£48.00	£3.00	6.7%

## Annual Membership

The below annual membership prices are the cost of 11 single payments of the above monthly direct debit membership price.

<b>Fitness Direct</b>	<b>Current Price</b>	<b>Proposed Price</b>	<b>Price Variance</b>	<b>Price Variance</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
Single Peak Annual	£616.00	£638.00	£22.00	3.6%
Senior Annual	£484.00	£517.00	£33.00	6.8%
Student Annual	£385.00	£423.50	£38.50	10.0%
Concessionary Annual	£484.00	£517.00	£33.00	6.8%
Single Corporate Annual	£495.00	£510.40	£15.40	3.1%
Single NFDC Corporate Annual	£363.00	£385.00	£22.00	6.1%
<b>Swim Direct</b>				
Swim Annual	£407.00	£440.00	£33.00	8.1%
Swim Annual 65yrs+	£330.00	£352.00	£22.00	6.7%
<b>Gym Direct</b>				
Gym Annual	£495.00	£528.00	£33.00	6.7%



## Swimming Activities

- Average % increase across all Swimming Activities is 7.2%.
- The highest % increase is concessionary junior swim at 8.3%, which is an increase of £0.25.
- The lowest percentage increase is the member junior swim at 7.1% which is an increase of £0.25.

	Price Product	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>Public Swim</b>	Senior Active	£4.00	£4.30	£0.30	7.5%
	Concessionary Adt	£4.00	£4.30	£0.30	7.5%
	Concessionary Jnr	£3.00	£3.25	£0.25	8.3%
	Member Adt	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
	Member Jnr	£3.50	£3.75	£0.25	7.1%
	N/member Adt	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
	N/member Jnr	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.1%
	Special	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.0%
	Standard	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
<b>Public Swim 3-7yrs</b>	Standard	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00	0.0%
<b>Public Swim 65yrs+</b>	Senior Active	£4.00	£4.30	£0.30	7.5%
	Concessionary Adt	£4.00	£4.30	£0.30	7.5%
	Member Adt	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.0%
	N/member Adt	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.0%
	Special	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.0%
	Standard	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.0%
<b>Public Swim Family</b>	Standard	£17.00	£18.35	£1.35	7.9%
<b>Fun Swim</b>	Senior Active	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
<b>Holiday Fun Swim</b>	Concessionary Adt	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
	Concessionary Jnr	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.1%
	Member Adt	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
	Member Jnr	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.1%
	N/member Adt	£6.00	£6.45	£0.45	7.5%
	N/member Jnr	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.1%
	Special	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
	Standard	£7.00	£7.50	£0.50	7.1%
				£0.00	
<b>Swim Training LHL</b>	Standard	£9.70	£10.40	£0.70	7.2%
			£0.00		
<b>Adult swim Lesson PAYG</b>	Standard	£9.00	£9.65	£0.65	7.2%

## Clubs & private hire

- Average % increase across all club and private hire in this section is 7.2%.
- Swimming lessons that are cancelled will be equal to the total membership base at the time of the event. The hirer will be charged to that value.
- The lifeguard hourly rate will be based on the national living wage as on costs, at the time of this event.

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
Dance Studio-M	£22.40	£24.00	£1.60	7.14%
	£16.50	£17.75	£1.25	7.58%
GA Room-S	£17.50	£18.75	£1.25	7.14%
	£11.70	£12.51	£0.81	6.92%
Studio 2-S	£17.50	£18.75	£1.25	7.14%
	£11.70	£12.51	£0.81	6.92%
MBS-M	£22.40	£24.00	£1.60	7.14%
	£16.50	£17.75	£1.25	7.58%
<b>Lymington</b>				
Studio 1-L	£26.50	£28.40	£1.90	7.17%
	£18.50	£19.75	£1.25	6.76%
Studio 2-M	£22.40	£24.00	£1.60	7.14%
	£16.50	£17.75	£1.25	7.58%
<b>New Milton</b>				
Studio 1-L	£26.50	£28.40	£1.90	7.17%
	£18.50	£19.75	£1.25	6.76%
Studio 2-M	£22.40	£24.00	£1.60	7.14%
	£16.50	£17.75	£1.25	7.58%
<b>Ringwood</b>				
Studio -L	£26.50	£28.40	£1.90	7.17%
	£18.50	£19.75	£1.25	6.76%
Studio 2-S	£22.40	£24.00	£1.60	7.14%
	£16.50	£17.75	£1.25	7.58%

## Unsupervised Activities (Badminton, Main hall, fitness suite etc)

- Average % increase across all Unsupervised Activities is 7.6%.
- The highest % increase is holiday courtx2 court hire 8.00%, which is an increase of £0.60.
- The lowest percentage increase is a Badminton Court 7.41%, which is an increase of £0.65.

	Price Product	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>Induction 60 mins</b>	Member Adt	£17.50	£18.85	£1.35	7.71%
	N/member Adt	£17.50	£18.85	£1.35	7.71%
	N/member Jnr	£17.50	£18.85	£1.35	7.71%
	Standard	£17.50	£18.85	£1.35	7.71%
	All	£17.50	£18.85	£1.35	7.71%
<b>Gym review 30 mins</b>	Member Adt	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%
	N/member Adt	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%
	N/member Jnr	£4.75	£5.10	£0.35	7.37%
	Standard	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%
<b>Body stat</b>	Senior Active	£11.00	£11.85	£0.85	7.73%
	Member Adt	£14.50	£15.60	£1.10	7.59%
	Member Jnr	£11.00	£11.85	£0.85	7.73%
	N/member Adt	£14.50	£15.60	£1.10	7.59%
	N/member Jnr	£14.50	£15.60	£1.10	7.59%
	Special	£14.50	£15.60	£1.10	7.59%
	Standard	£14.50	£15.60	£1.10	7.59%
<b>Gym session</b>	Senior Active	£4.40	£4.75	£0.35	7.95%
	Member Adt	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%
	Member Jnr	£2.90	£3.10	£0.20	6.90%
	N/member Adt	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%
	N/member Jnr	£5.00	£5.35	£0.35	7.00%
	Standard	£9.25	£9.95	£0.70	7.57%

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>Badminton</b>	£12.00	£12.90	£0.90	7.50%
	£8.80	£9.45	£0.65	7.41%
	£8.40	£9.05	£0.65	7.74%
	£6.50	£7.00	£0.50	7.69%
Holiday court	£4.25	£4.55	£0.30	7.06%
<b>Basketball</b>				
4 Courts AHL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.50	£39.25	£2.75	7.53%
2 Courts AHL	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
	£17.50	£18.75	£1.25	7.14%
1 Court RHL	£12.00	£12.90	£0.90	7.50%
	£8.80	£9.45	£0.65	7.41%
	£8.40	£9.05	£0.65	7.74%
	£6.50	£7.00	£0.50	7.69%
Whole Hall RHL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.50	£39.25	£2.75	7.53%
2 Courts RHL	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
	£17.50	£18.80	£1.30	7.43%
4 Courts THL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.50	£39.25	£2.75	7.53%
2 Courts THL	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
	£17.50	£18.80	£1.30	7.43%
Holiday Courts x2	£7.50	£8.10	£0.60	8.00%

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>5 a side Football</b>				
4 Courts AHL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.50	£39.25	£2.75	7.53%
2 Courts NMHL	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
	£17.50	£18.80	£1.30	7.43%
Whole Hall NMHL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.50	£39.25	£2.75	7.53%
Whole Hall RHL	£60.00	£64.50	£4.50	7.50%
	£36.40	£39.25	£2.85	7.83%
<b>Softplay Areas (RHL)</b>				
U2yrs	£3.50	£3.75	£0.25	7.14%
2yrs+	£4.40	£4.75	£0.35	7.95%
<b>Table Tennis</b>	£7.00	£7.55	£0.55	7.86%
<b>Tennis Court (Carvers) RHL-Unlit</b>	£7.50	£8.10	£0.60	8.00%
	£7.00	£7.55	£0.55	7.86%
<b>Tennis Court (Carvers) RHL-Lit</b>	£9.70	£10.45	£0.75	7.73%
	£9.00	£9.70	£0.70	7.78%
<b>Unclubbables AHL</b>	£6.40	£6.90	£0.50	7.81%
	£7.00	£7.55	£0.55	7.86%
	£7.50	£8.05	£0.55	7.33%
<b>Adult Open Badminton MNHL</b>	£6.40	£6.90	£0.50	7.81%
	£7.40	£7.95	£0.55	7.43%
<b>Holiday Mega/Bounce/Tramp/Gym</b>	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.14%

## Supervised activities (includes Active Lifestyles request not above October CPI)

- Average % increase across all Supervised Activities is 7.6%.
- The highest % increase is 17.6 % Sauna Steam and Swim AHL (Member, None Member, Special and Standard)
- The lowest percentage increase is 1.51% Active Lifestyles activity morning, which is an **increase of £0.04**.

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>PAYG Memberships</b>				
Teen Active	£39.00	£45.00	£6.00	15.38%
Senior Active	£39.00	£45.00	£6.00	15.38%

Course Direct	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>Applemore</b>				
Course DD 40-60min	£26.00	£28.00	£2.00	7.69%
Course Annual 40-60min	£260.00	£280.00	£20.00	7.69%
<b>Lymington</b>			£0.00	
Course DD 40-60min	£26.00	£28.00	£2.00	7.69%
Course Annual 40-60min	£260.00	£280.00	£20.00	7.69%
<b>New Milton</b>			£0.00	
Course DD 40-60min	£26.00	£28.00	£2.00	7.69%
Course Annual 40-60min	£260.00	£280.00	£20.00	7.69%
Course DD 75-90min	£32.00	£35.20	£3.20	10.00%
Course Annual 75-90min	£315.00	£346.00	£31.00	9.84%
<b>Ringwood</b>			£0.00	
Course DD 40-60min	£26.00	£28.00	£2.00	7.69%
Course Annual 40-60min	£260.00	£280.00	£20.00	7.69%
<b>Totton</b>			£0.00	
Course DD 40-60min	£26.00	£28.00	£2.00	7.69%
Course Annual 40-60min	£260.00	£280.00	£20.00	7.69%
Course DD 75-90min	£32.00	£35.20	£3.20	10.00%
Course Annual 75-90min	£315.00	£346.00	£31.00	9.84%

<b>Group Fitness</b>	<b>Price Product</b>	<b>Current Price £</b>	<b>Proposed Price £</b>	<b>Price Variance £</b>	<b>Price Variance %</b>
<b>No show Charge</b>		£3.00	£3.00	£0.00	0%
				£0.00	
<b>30 minute class</b>	Senior Active	£4.35	£4.80	£0.45	10.34%
	Concessionary Adt	£4.35	£4.80	£0.45	10.34%
	Concessionary Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	Member Adt	£5.70	£6.25	£0.55	9.65%
	Member Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	N/member Adt	£5.70	£6.25	£0.55	9.65%
	N/member Jnr	£5.70	£6.25	£0.55	9.65%
	Special	£4.40	£4.85	£0.45	10.23%
	Standard	£5.70	£6.25	£0.55	9.65%
				£0.00	
<b>45 minute class</b>	Senior Active	£4.35	£4.80	£0.45	10.34%
	Concessionary Adt	£4.35	£4.80	£0.45	10.34%
	Concessionary Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	Member Adt	£6.90	£7.60	£0.70	10.14%
	Member Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	N/member Adt	£6.90	£7.60	£0.70	10.14%
	N/member Jnr	£6.90	£7.60	£0.70	10.14%
	Special	£4.40	£4.85	£0.45	10.23%
	Standard	£6.90	£7.60	£0.70	10.14%
				£0.00	
<b>60 Minute Class</b>	Senior Active	£4.40	£4.85	£0.45	10.23%
	Concessionary Adt	£4.40	£4.85	£0.45	10.23%
	Concessionary Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	Member Adt	£8.70	£9.60	£0.90	10.34%
	Member Jnr	£2.70	£2.95	£0.25	9.26%
	N/member Adt	£8.70	£9.60	£0.90	10.34%
	N/member Jnr	£8.70	£9.60	£0.90	10.34%
	Special	£4.40	£4.85	£0.45	10.23%
	Standard	£8.80	£9.70	£0.90	10.23%

Active Lifestyles	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
A/L Package 12 week Package	£85.00	£86.45	£1.45	1.71%
A/L Escape Pain 6 week Package	£42.50	£43.20	£0.70	1.65%
A/L First assesment	£11.90	£12.10	£0.20	1.68%
A/L Mid assesment				
A/L Final assesment				
A/L Programme				
A/L Gym Session	£4.25	£4.32	£0.07	1.65%
A/L Cadiac circuits				
A/L Review				
A/L Class	£9.00	£9.15	£0.15	1.67%
A/L activity morning	£2.65	£2.69	£0.04	1.51%
	£9.00	£9.15	£0.15	1.67%
	£4.80	£4.88	£0.08	1.67%
A/L Supervision	£4.25	£4.32	£0.07	1.65%
A/L Course	£3.70	£3.76	£0.06	1.62%
A/L Escape Pain Course	£42.50	£43.22	£0.72	1.69%
A/L Parkinson class				
A/L Steady & Strong class	£4.25	£4.32	£0.07	1.65%
A/L First Assesment Cardiac	£11.90	£12.10	£0.20	1.68%
A/L First Assesment COPD	£11.90	£12.10	£0.20	1.68%
A/L First Assessment Escape Pain	£11.90	£12.10	£0.20	1.68%
A/L Graduate Package (3 Months, Price per month)	£37.00	£37.63	£0.63	1.70%
A/L Group First Assessment	£4.80	£4.88	£0.08	1.67%

	Price Product	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
Sauna steam and swim AHL	Senior Active	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.0%
Out Side Core Products	Concessionary Adt	£5.00	£5.50	£0.50	10.0%
	Member Adt	£8.50	£10.00	£1.50	17.6%
	N/member Adt	£8.50	£10.00	£1.50	17.6%
	Special	£8.50	£10.00	£1.50	17.6%
	Standard	£8.50	£10.00	£1.50	17.6%



<b>Personal Training</b>	<b>Current Price</b> £	<b>Proposed Price</b> £	<b>Price Variance</b> £	<b>Price Variance</b> %
<b>PT 1:1 Session 60min</b>	£42.50	£46.75	£4.25	10%
			£0.00	
<b>PT 1:1 Six Session</b>	£230.00	£247.00	£17.00	7%
			£0.00	
<b>PT 2:1 Session 60min</b>	£47.50	£52.25	£4.75	10%
			£0.00	
<b>PT 1:2 Six Session</b>	£250.00	£269.00	£19.00	8%
			£0.00	
<b>PT 1:1 session 30min</b>	£23.00	£24.75	£1.75	8%

<b>Training</b>	<b>Current Price</b> £	<b>Proposed Price</b> £	<b>Price Variance</b> £	<b>Price Variance</b> %
<b>NPLQ full course</b>	£299.00	£299.00	£0.00	0.00%
<b>NPLQ Exam retest</b>				
<b>Swim Teaching Course</b>	£480.00	£515.00	£35.00	7.29%
<b>STA Pool Safety Award</b>	£99.00	£106.25	£7.25	7.32%
<b>First Aid at Work</b>	£225.00	£242.00	£17.00	7.56%
<b>FAW Renewal</b>	£150.00	£161.00	£11.00	7.33%
<b>Emergency First Aid (at work)</b>	£95.00	£102.00	£7.00	7.37%
<b>First Aid Bolt On</b>	£59.00	£63.50	£4.50	7.63%

## Children's parties

- Exclusive 1 Hour session.
- 60 Minute use of a studio for cake at an additional charge.
- Food is provided at an additional charge.

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>Applemore</b>				
Bounce and Play with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
Fun Time Pool with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
Soft Play with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
Aqua run with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
<b>Lymington</b>				
Bounce and Soft play	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
Learner pool Party	£99.00	£106.25	£7.25	7.32%
Fun Time Pool Party	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
BYO Party Room Hire	£30.00	£32.25	£2.25	7.51%
<b>New Milton</b>				
Bounce and Soft play	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
Fun Time Pool Party	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
BYO Party Room Hire	£30.00	£32.25	£2.25	7.50%
Aqua run			£0.00	
<b>Ringwood</b>				
Bounce and Play with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
Fun Time Pool with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
Soft Play with catering	£259.00	£278.00	£19.00	7.34%
<b>Totton</b>				
Bounce Party BYO	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
Bounce and play	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
Learner pool Party	£99.00	£106.25	£7.25	7.32%
Fun Time Pool Party	£119.00	£128.00	£9.00	7.56%
BYO Party Room Hire	£30.00	£32.25	£2.25	7.50%

### All weather pitch (AWP)

- Average % increase across all AWP is 7.6%.
- The highest % individual court hire at 8.03%, which is an increase of £3.20.
- The lowest increase is court junior rate 6.38%, which is an increase of £1.50

Major Event Competitions will remain as negotiated between the operator and the hirer.

	Current Price £	Proposed Price £	Price Variance £	Price Variance %
<b>ATP</b>				
1/3 ATP	£39.80	£43.00	£3.20	8.03%
	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
Whole ATP	£92.75	£99.50	£6.75	7.28%
ATP Court RHL	£39.80	£43.00	£3.20	8.03%
	£23.50	£25.25	£1.75	7.45%
ATP Court JNR Special RHL	£23.50	£25.00	£1.50	6.38%
Holiday Court	£14.10	£15.15	£1.05	7.46%

## Colleague Memberships

A colleague membership is available to all Freedom Leisure Employees, providing employees with access to our gyms, group exercise classes and swimming pools. Employees also benefit from discounts of 50% for swimming lessons which include family members.

Benefits	Colleague	Additional Person (16 yrs +)	Additional Child (Under 16 yrs)
	Gold Card	Silver Card	Bronze Card
Who Qualifies	Colleague	Partner / Family Member	Family Member*
Price	£5	£10	FREE
Gym	✓	✓	✓ **
Classes	✓	✓	✓ **
Swim	✓	✓	✓
Family Swimming / Soft Play	✓	✓	✓
Off-Peak Courts	✓	✓	✓
Swimming Lessons	50% off	50% off	50% off
Holiday Activities	50% off	50% off	50% off
Events	50% off	50% off	50% off
Access to F&B discounts	✓	N/A	N/A
Group Wide Access	✓	✓	✓
<b>Bolt On: Class Booking Rights</b>	<b>Add £10 per month</b>	<b>Add £10 per month</b>	<b>N/A</b>

## Appendix A – Competitor Analysis

**Memberships – Competitor Analysis**

- **Pure Gym** - £23.99 first month then £31.99 a month plus £10 joining fee. Included in the membership – Gym and Classes with 14 days advance booking
- **The Gym Group** - £21.99 with a £5 join fee included in the membership – Gym & classes
- **Anytime Fitness** - £35.99 a month – Gym & Classes
- **David Lloyd** - £94.50 a month Included in the membership – Gym, Classes, Swimming and racket sports.
- **Gang Warily** (independent) - £45.00 a month included in the membership - Gym & Classes
- **Hills Gym** (independent) - £59.99 a month included in the membership – Gym and on demand home work out videos. Group fitness classes and personal training sessions extra.
- **Shorefield (Milford on Sea)** (independent) - £49.00 a month included in the membership – Gym, classes, swimming and multi court use.

## Committee and Panel Memberships

### Appeals Committee (13 Members)

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (4)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>	<b>Non-Aligned (1)</b>
John Adams	Mark Clark	Joe Reilly		John Haywood
Alan Alvey	Philip Dowd			
Barry Dunning	Colm McCarthy			
Allan Glass	Phil Woods			
John Sleep				
Neil Tungate				
Christine Ward				

### Audit Committee (9 Members)

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (2)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
John Adams	Jack Davies	Jacqui England	Janet Richards
Alan Alvey	Caroline Rackham		
Kate Crisell			
Alan O'Sullivan			
Richard Young			

### General Purposes and Licensing Committee (13 Members)

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (4)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Steve Clarke	Jack Davies	Nigel Linford	Janet Richards
Allan Glass	Philip Dowd		
David Hawkins	David Harrison		
Dave Penny	Colm McCarthy		
Alvin Reid			
Neil Tungate			
Richard Young			

### **HR Committee (9 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (3)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
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Jill Cleary	Mark Clark	Joe Reilly	
Kate Crisell	Sean Cullen		
Steve Davies	Colm McCarthy		
Jeremy Heron			
Alan O'Sullivan			

### **Planning Committee (13 Members)**

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (4)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
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Kate Crisell	Hilary Brand	Joe Reilly	Janet Richards
Matthew Hartmann	Philip Dowd		
David Hawkins	Malcolm Wade		
Dave Penny	Phil Woods		
Barry Rickman			
John Sleep			
Christine Ward			

### **Housing And Communities Overview And Scrutiny Panel (9 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (3)</b>	<b>Independent (0)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
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Steve Clarke	Hilary Brand		Janet Richards
Kate Crisell	Sean Cullen		
Ian Murray	Patrick Mballa		
Neville Penman			
Neil Tungate			

<b>Conservative Subs (2)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat Subs (2)</b>	<b>Green Subs (2)</b>
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Allan Glass	Colm McCarthy	Adam Parker
Barry Rickman	Alex Wade	X1 Vacancy

**Place And Sustainability Overview And Scrutiny Panel (9 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (2)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Allan Glass Matthew Hartmann Alvin Reid Steve Rippon-Swaine Michael Thierry	Stephanie Osborne Malcolm Wade	Peter Armstrong	Adam Parker

<b>Conservative Subs (2)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat Subs (2)</b>	<b>Independent Subs (2)</b>	<b>Green Subs (2)</b>
Steve Clarke Kate Crisell	Caroline Rackham Phil Woods	Nigel Linford Joe Reilly	Janet Richards X1 Vacancy

**Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel (9 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (3)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
Alan Alvey Barry Dunning Alan O'Sullivan Barry Rickman Christine Ward	Jack Davies Alex Wade Phil Woods	Jacqui England	

<b>Conservative Subs (2)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat Subs (2)</b>	<b>Independent Subs (2)</b>
John Adams Alvin Reid	Philip Dowd David Harrison	Peter Armstrong Joe Reilly

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## **Council – 9 December 2024 – Questions Under Standing Order 22**

### **First Questions**

#### **Question 1**

##### **From Cllr Alan Alvey to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

At a recent Parish Council community consultation held to consider the recent revised planning application submitted for the Fawley Waterside site, it was clear that some residents believed that, because of the Freeport Zone status, NFDC would not be able to refuse the application.

Would the Portfolio Holder please confirm the situation with planning applications for sites within the Freeport Zone.

#### **Question 2**

##### **From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden**

Residents are rightly dismayed at the state of the public toilets in New Street, Lymington. Lymington is the retail capital of the New Forest but the state of these toilets are an embarrassment. When will these toilets be refurbished to the same standard as other local public toilets?

#### **Question 3**

##### **From Cllr David Millar to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

Farming is of strategic importance to the UK, providing food security for our nation, reducing food miles, and providing well-managed countryside for our communities to enjoy. However, the NFDC's current call for sites will mean developers encouraging farm owners to offer up their land for speculative development opportunities. Can you tell me how this Council balances the need to support our Farmers whilst also looking to meet Government house-building targets?

#### **Question 4**

##### **From Cllr Mark Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

With a Labour Government driving the push for larger Unitary Authorities, how will you ensure that the unique needs of the Community won't be overshadowed by the priorities of a much larger administrative body?

#### **Question 5**

##### **From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden**

Will the Council carry out a cost benefit analysis of constructing canopies with solar panels on District Council car parks?

#### **Question 6**

##### **From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

Can the Leader confirm how much in business rates and net gain NFDC have received currently from the Solent Freeport sites?

#### **Question 7**

##### **From Cllr David Harrison to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Dan Poole**

Following the excellent local campaign being run by the 'Waterside Changemakers' what is NFDC doing to help address the lack of reliable and affordable transport options, which is leaving many Residents isolated or reliant on cars? And is this not an opportunity to be proactive and work with County, Town and Parish Councils on a genuine issue for our Residents?

#### **Question 8**

##### **From Cllr Hilary Brand to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

How does the Council plan to increase transparency and public engagement in its decision making process, particularly when major policies often seem to be decided behind closed doors?

## **Question 9**

### **From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Steve Davies**

Please can the portfolio holder update Council on the number of Families and Single people on the our NFDC's housing waiting list? And how many have we successfully housed and provided suitable accommodation for since the last update?

## **Second Questions**

### **Question 10**

#### **From Cllr Mark Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

Why, and to whom and for what benefit has NFDC outsourced building control?

### **Question 11**

#### **From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Dan Poole**

As the Portfolio Holder responsible for our 'partnership agreement' with Freedom Leisure, can he advise what feedback and engagement he undertakes on behalf of the Council, it's Residents and Service Users with Freedom?

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