

NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting: CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Date and Time: THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2017, AT 9.30 AM*

Place: COMMITTEE ROOM 1, APPLETREE COURT,
LYNDHURST

Telephone enquiries to: Lyndhurst (023) 8028 5000
023 8028 5588 - ask for Andy Rogers
Email: andy.rogers@nfdc.gov.uk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

*Members of the public may speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme:

- (a) immediately before the meeting starts, on items within the Panel's terms of reference which are not on the public agenda; and/or
 - (b) on individual items on the public agenda, when the Chairman calls that item.
- Speeches may not exceed three minutes. Anyone wishing to speak should contact the name and number shown above.

Bob Jackson
Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA
www.newforest.gov.uk

This Agenda is also available on audio tape, in Braille, large print and digital format

AGENDA

Apologies

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note any declarations of interest made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interest must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To note any issues raised during the public participation period.

4. RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUNITY CARE IN THE NEW FOREST (Pages 1 - 4)

To note a report on the significance of the Care Sector in the New Forest district, the constraints it faces and assess where NFDC can provide practical assistance and support.

5. CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW - INTERIM REPORT (Pages 5 - 8)

To receive an interim report on the review of Customer Services.

6. KEY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 9 - 12)

To note the progress on the key actions and Service reviews under the remit of this Panel.

7. HOUSING WHITE PAPER (Pages 13 - 20)

To note the implications of the Housing White Paper and offer comments to the Portfolio Holders to inform their response to the Consultation.

8. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 21 - 22)

(a) To consider the Panel's future Work Programme, including any reviews of previous work undertaken; and

(b) To receive any updates on Task and Finish Group work.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES

An opportunity for the Portfolio Holders to provide an update to the Panel on any issues.

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

To: **Councillors:**

M R Harris (Chairman)
Mrs A M Rostand (Vice-Chairman)
A R Alvey
W G Andrews
M J Kendal

Councillors:

Mrs A E McEvoy
A D O'Sullivan
M A Steele
D B Tipp
C A Wise

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 16 MARCH 2017

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUNITY SOCIAL CARE IN THE NEW FOREST

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to highlight the significance of the care sector within the New Forest economy and draw attention to some of the issues and barriers currently restricting it. Whilst some of these issues are beyond the immediate remit of the District Council, it will consider areas where this local authority can provide practical assistance and support.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The importance of the care sector in the New Forest and its impact on the local economy should not be underestimated. The residential care sector alone represents around 4000 local jobs equating to 5.8% of the total New Forest workforce. This is more than double the national average of 2.5% employed within this sector.
- 2.2 Non-residential care accounts for a further 1250 employees within the New Forest representing approximately 1.8% of the local workforce. Again, this is significantly greater than the national average of 1.0%
- 2.3 A low-end estimate of the value of the residential care sector suggests it is worth approximately £72.5m by way of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the New Forest economy representing around 2.4% of the total economy. Non-residential social care is worth a further £20m to the local economy; again a low-end estimate.
- 2.4 These figures however represent only the value of the specific sectors. They do not take account of secondary and tertiary spend through local supply chains which is not without significance.
- 2.5 The age profile of the New Forest is increasing at a steady rate. Between 2015 and 2022 the population aged 65+ is set to increase by over 5000, an increase of approximately 9% on the current rate. Whilst not all of these individuals will require dedicated and/or specialist care, there is likely to be further demand on resources currently available.

3. CHALLENGES FACING THE CARE SECTOR

- 3.1 The challenges facing the care sector, particularly in terms of funding have been well documented. Whilst the care sector's funding for care places comes from a combination of private individuals and local authorities, the latter are the single largest purchasers.
- 3.2 With the increasing spending pressures upon local authorities, there have been moves to negotiate lower prices for the places provided. This in turn has resulted in need for care providers to seek cross-subsidisation from private residents; a situation which is placing financial pressures on a number of providers. Whilst the Chancellor has announced a discretionary 2% Council Tax precept, this will not cover the wider funding challenges within the sector.
- 3.3 The purpose of this report is not to seek a solution to the funding challenges facing the industry, only to briefly outline them for the purpose of information and context.

- 3.4 Staffing costs are the largest cost item of care homes. Whilst the financial crisis kept wage inflation to a minimum in the years immediately following; the introduction of the National Living Wage from £7.20 currently to £9.00 by 2020 will add further pressure to the sector's finances, particularly given the forecast increase in demand for these services.
- 3.5 The combination of comparatively low wages and high property prices within the district mean that recruitment of staff is often challenging. The average house price in the New Forest is now 12.5 times the average salary across all sectors so the impact felt by those working within the lower paid care sector would be exacerbated. Furthermore care sector workers' limited access to private transport and the restricted availability of public transport to support shift work restrict workers' ability to get to their place of employment. The Wheels to Work scheme (providing a loaned moped) aimed at 16-25 year olds addresses this in part, but for workers outside of this age bracket it remains a challenge.
- 3.6 With the forecast growth in the care sector in the years ahead, the industry faces challenges in identifying suitable sites for new premises where both care spaces can be provided but also where workers can be accommodated for easier access to their place of work. The visitor economy which faces parallel issues with regard to low wage economy has been successful in offering worker accommodation on or close to site. There is potential for similar policies to be adopted or expanded within the care sector.

4. SKILLS AND TRAINING IN THE CARE SECTOR

- 4.1 Quality care provision is reliant upon skilled and qualified staff to deliver the required services. Health and Social Care qualifications and apprenticeships are offered by both Brockenhurst and Totton Colleges. Apprenticeships in particular offer financial incentives for employers albeit resources are required within individual businesses to transfer the skills from the existing workforce to those in training.
- 4.2 Whilst it is acknowledged that all sectors work with a degree of regulation, the regulations set down within the care industry are under particular scrutiny. This comes with resource implications for care sector businesses both in terms of time and/or associated cost.
- 4.3 Work carried out by the UK Commission for Employment & Skills showed that within the sector, the greatest skills gap amongst employers was for job specific skills and, despite a high proportion of well qualified staff (61% to NVQ 4 or above compared to 35% across the whole economy) there remains around 16% who have no qualifications or NVQ 1. Unqualified and staff present a threat to quality care provision and potentially to compliance with regulatory legislation.
- 4.4 Despite high instances of (regulatory) formal and informal training, the number of employees receiving training within care is lower than the all-sector average and the associated skills gap within the industry is having a direct impact. Specifically this is reflected in an increased workload for other staff, increased operating costs and a difficulty in meeting quality standards.
- 4.5 Despite these challenges, evidence across a range of sectors suggests that employers who invest in training and more likely to survive than those which don't. Furthermore, the productivity gains for firms from investing in training are higher than the increased wages experienced by employees.
- 4.6 Whilst there is a strong network of local care providers through the Hampshire Care Association in particular, there is limited communication or dialogue with local education providers and/or related sectors. Through networks already established, New Forest District Council has the opportunity to act as an 'honest broker' in developing these relationships so that some of the above issues can be examined. Specifically the care sector is not currently represented on the board of New Forest Business Partnership. Addressing this would develop cross-sector relationships with those who currently feed into the agendas set.

5. BUILDING ON EXISTING INITIATIVES

- 5.1 Rather than reinventing the wheel, work can be carried out at a local level to support those in need of care.
- 5.2 The Appletree Careline wristband scheme and Dementia Friends are both examples of initiatives which aim to provide those in need of care yet living at home with a greater feeling of independence. Through established networks, particularly of local retail businesses, work can be undertaken to raise awareness and ensure that those with specific needs are in a safe environment when outside their own home. Work has already been undertaken in Lyndhurst, Lymington and New Milton to see them recognised as 'Dementia Friendly'. Again, many of the elements of this exercise already exist; there is only the need for greater joined up working.
- 5.3 An element of building on existing initiatives links closely with Section 4 above on Skills and Training. Projects have been successfully implemented elsewhere in the country (specific examples in Nottingham and Bradford) to provide peer group and remote/virtual learning to those in the care sector. These projects have built on existing knowledge and expertise within the sector locally to share best practice and identify specific training needs. The online accessible training also overcomes some of the aforementioned barriers to movement of employees and reduces the cost of delivery in already constrained budgets.
- 5.4 Initial discussions have already taken place about replicating elements of the programmes in Nottingham and Bradford and these discussions will continue.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications arising from this report

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. The resulting work can be undertaken using existing networks and resources with the Economic Development Team.

10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The care sector is one of the most significant within New Forest's local economy both in terms of the number of people it employs and the money it generates locally either directly or through associated supply chains. This significance will only increase as the local population age profile increases.
- 10.2 There are challenges in accessing local staff owing to the low wages, high property prices and restricted access to transport. Where staff are recruited they are often under-skilled, requiring training which has direct resource implications on the businesses.

- 10.3 Whilst there is a network of care sector businesses, they are at times disconnected from the support and information which could help them to overcome the barriers addressed in this report. Specifically there are links which can be made with education establishments, other local business sectors and retail business owners.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel should note the contents of this report.
- 11.2 New Forest District Council should use its existing relationships with local education establishments, networks and care sector businesses to act as 'honest broker' in developing relationships to ensure that businesses are accessing the full range of support available to them.
- 11.3 Further work should be undertaken to explore the potential for collaboration in sharing best practice amongst care sector businesses and developing the skills of employees through training that is accessible to them.

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – 16 MARCH 2016

CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW – INTERIM REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- 1.1 The corporate plan included a delivery plan which set out a number of key actions for 2016/17. This delivery plan was set out against the background of continued funding reductions and included a review of customer services to 'Transform the management of demand through digital customer services and engagement (having regard to the work of Fit for the Future)'.
- 1.2 This report provides the panel with an interim update on the work of the project team and member task and finish group and outlines some early findings to be considered by the Project Board.

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE REVIEW

- 2.1 The project brief identified four main areas for the review to consider including customer strategy, digital service delivery, information offices and the customer services centre. Issues and opportunities within these areas are being considered by a project team of key officers and service representatives, and a member task and finish group comprising of:

Cllr A Alvey
Cllr B Andrews
Cllr G Beck
Cllr Mrs F Carpenter
Cllr M R Harris
Cllr A D O'Sullivan (Chair)

- 2.2 Work has been undertaken to inform the strategic direction of customer services for the future; other strategies have been assessed, top ten transactions identified, current arrangements documented and customers have been surveyed. Task & finish group members have also visited Information Offices and the Customer Service Centre and observed transactions as part of the project. This work is ongoing but has resulted in some initial findings and short and medium term key actions to be reported to the Project Board to progress the review.

3. INITIAL FINDINGS

- 3.1 Customer Service Strategy

The general initial consensus arising from the review is that multiple delivery channels are necessary to meet the differing needs of the district's residents. This is further supported by the findings of the customer survey which concludes that there is a need for face to face support for some of the more complex enquiries i.e. Housing and Housing Benefit.

However, there are opportunities to encourage those who could use online service delivery, but perhaps lack confidence to do so, through assisted support at the information offices i.e. digital champions and in time this would free up resources to support our most vulnerable customers and those who are unable to engage digitally, now or in the future.

It is suggested that a simple strategy be developed to support this approach and it is intended that any changes to the way services are delivered, and the promotion of the potential benefits, are widely communicated to customers.

3.2 Digital Service Delivery

To support a strategy that encourages online delivery and meets the increasing digital expectations of society, the customer experience has to be simple and effective, giving them control over when and how they access services. This will require the development of the website to better enable self-service and online service delivery functionality, integrated with back office systems and underpinned by re-engineered processes that provide the most efficient workflow, designed around the needs of the customers. This in turn should reduce unnecessary demand at the Information Offices and the Customer Service Centre.

3.3 Information Offices

As part of the material considered by the Task and Finish Group, information and costs of the arrangements with partners was shared, and opportunities for all information offices continue to be considered as part of the review.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Website Development

The project team and task and finish group received a number of demonstrations from technology providers, each of whom highlighted the need for website development and enhancement. In the short-term it is suggested that the current website be developed to ensure some quick wins in terms of functionality and look and feel. This work is underway. The task and finish group has endorsed the need to extend the arrangements with the current provider whilst detailed procurement opportunities are examined for the future redesign and delivery of the website. A specification to detail the technology requirements will be compiled by the end of June 2017.

4.2 Back Office Systems

Website development has the potential to provide a more user-friendly experience to the customer, although efficiency benefits will only be derived if this is supported by appropriate back office systems to enable an end to end process that requires little, if any, human intervention. The need for this investment has already been identified for key areas including waste and recycling and further identification of system improvements should arise from the process mapping and re-engineering of top tasks.

4.3 Top Transactions and Demand Management

The management of demand is a key objective of the review to ensure that unnecessary customer contact is reduced and resources are freed up.

To reduce this type of demand it is necessary to process-map top transactions and identify, and remove activities that result in little or no value to the customer. This will be a key action moving forward with a target completion date of the end of June 2017.

4.4 Public PC's

Visits to Information Offices and to our Town & Parish partners have identified improvement opportunities including the current provision of public computers in the offices which are inadequate and wouldn't support digital self-service or assisted self-service in the future. The appropriate provision of technology needs to be considered to enable this i.e. tablets or self-service hubs and enhance the benefits of the partnership arrangements that already exist.

4.5 Other Authorities

Visits to other authorities are planned to gain an insight into the support and technology available and to ensure NFDC can offer an exemplar customer service experience.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although investment in technology is a likely outcome of the review which will in turn result in financial efficiencies. These will be reported upon as they arise. Some interim improvements to the Council's website may incur modest costs.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes the initial findings and key actions for the customers services review contained within the report.
- 6.2 That a further report be brought to the Panel in September 2017.

For Further Information Please Contact:

Rebecca Drummond
Service Manager – Business Improvement
and Customer Services
Tel: 023 8028 5588
E Mail: rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers

Customer Services Review Project Brief –
COSP 22 September 2016

Our corporate plan 2016-2020 Delivery Plan
Cabinet Report Feb 2016

Cllr Alan O'Sullivan
Chair Customer Services Task & Finish Group
E Mail: Alan.OSullivan@newforest.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – 16 MARCH 2017

KEY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME – UPDATE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- 1.1 The corporate plan included a delivery plan which set out a number of key actions and reviews for 2016/17. This delivery plan was set out against the background of continued funding reductions.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on work being undertaken, as part of the regular monitoring of the delivery plan.

2. KEY DELIVERY ACTIONS AND SERVICE REVIEWS

- 2.1 The tables set out key delivery actions and service reviews appropriate to each of the overview and scrutiny panels and provide progress updates where available. To ensure a corporate overview of all reviews corporate overview and scrutiny panel are receiving progress updates for each review, where other panels will receive updates on reviews pertinent to that panel only. Completed reviews reported at the last update have been removed from the tables.

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Service Review and Terms of Reference		Progress Update
E.3	Supporting Local Business <i>Review the realistic aspirations of the Council in what it wishes to achieve and consider the mechanism for achieving this. Progress through the local plan review to support vibrant localities</i>	EMT agreed the restructure of Economic Development and Business Team in January 2017.
E.5	Tourism <i>Review the way in which the council engages with the Tourism industry and the delivery of the service</i>	The new destination marketing company was formed on 7 th February 2017 and detailed transfer arrangements are being finalised.
G.1	Procurement <i>Conclude the review of procurement with the implementation of centre led arrangements and a move towards a procurement partnership</i>	Completed The move to a centre led model has now been completed. Training of Purchasing Coordinators has been undertaken which means they can now use their purchasing cards to purchase items directly from suppliers and the Agresso system has been changed so that Purchasing Coordinators can raise orders directly with suppliers. In relation to higher value contracts, Service Managers have been given a list of contracts for which they are responsible in order to work with the Procurement team to secure the best outcome for each service area. The review has generated annual savings in the region of £67,000.
R.1	Digital Service Delivery <i>Review of ICT to support greater digital service delivery (having regard to the work of Fit for the Future)</i>	ICT strategy approved by COSP on 19 Jan and Cabinet on 1 Feb 2017. Work will now commence on the implementation of the strategy.
R.2	Pay & Reward <i>To determine a fit for purpose pay & reward strategy related to performance and productivity (having regard to the work of Fit for the Future)</i>	The Pay Panel will convene this month with a view to looking in particular at bands 1-4.

R.3	Building Works <i>Service delivery review to challenge existing model and maximise outcomes for the council and the customer, including optimising revenue potential and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the department</i>	A phase 1 service management review (excluding central stores, finance and admin) has been completed and consultation report presented to EMT in October 2016. The establishment of the new structure is now complete. The review has generated annual savings in the region of £74,000. Further phases are underway including a service management review (central stores, finance and admin) driven by the move to the centre-led procurement model and an operational review.
R.5	Customer Strategy <i>Transform the management of demand through digital customer services and engagement (having regard to the work of Fit for the Future)</i>	Project is underway and initial findings and early recommendations will be reported to COSP in March 2017.

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Service Review and Terms of Reference		Progress Update
E.1	Local Plan <i>Local plan consultation and draft submission for adoption</i>	Technical work progressing with a view to preparing and agreeing the Plan for Submission, with pre-submission period for representations in Autumn 2017. Content of Housing White Paper (expected February 2017) will need to be taken into account and will have significant implications for local planning policy formulation.
E.4	Building Control <i>Service delivery review of the Building Control service. Consider the sustainability of the existing arrangements and assess alternatives such as multi-authority joint service provision or a joint (arm's length) local authority trading company</i>	Alternative delivery models, including the possibility of a joint commercial venture, are being actively explored in partnership with other Hampshire local authorities. If this initiative does not prove to be satisfactory the Service will remain in house and a further review will be required.
G.2	Environmental Health <i>To review all aspects of the delivery of Environmental Health functions (to include Environmental Protection and Commercial)</i>	Proposed new structure went out for consultation on 30 January 2017. Formal report with consultation feedback to be presented to EMT week commencing 27 February with a view to interviewing to management roles in mid-March.
O.1	Waste & Recycling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine strategy in line with the county wide Project Integra review - Review of bring sites to rationalise costs 	Still awaiting findings of Project Integra review which includes a cost analysis being undertaken to establish viability of retrofitting Material Recovery Facilities to accept plastic pots, tubs and trays. Update due to HIOWLA Chief Executives on 31 March 2017. Work continues to be undertaken to plan the removal of the 80 plus bring sites in March/April 2017. Publicity to support this is ongoing with all sites being removed having notices on them and publicity on the councils website and social media continues.

O.3	Pest Control <i>Review of pest control to determine future strategy and operation</i>	Phase 1 completed with transfer of staff and responsibilities to the Open Spaces service. Early changes have been made to simplify pricing and processes. A further, more fundamental review is currently being scoped to be submitted to EMT March 2017.
O.5	Enforcement Activity (Streetscene) <i>Identify opportunities for joining up enforcement activities of visible officers</i>	Following the initial review of staffing structure consideration is being given to a more fundamental approach to enforcement activities including the parking service. This is being scoped and will commence in 2016/17.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Service Review and Terms of Reference		Progress Update
E.2	Housing Strategy <i>Review the delivery of affordable housing in terms of realistic aspirations of the Council and recent changes in the planning system. Assess the existing constraints and take into account the emerging new Government policy advice. Progress through the local plan review</i>	An interim review (Council Housing Buy-Back & Development Update 2012/13 – 2015/16 and Future Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/2019) has been undertaken and was considered and supported by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 20 September 2016
G.3	Community Safety <i>Review the Council's involvement in community safety (having regard to the Council's statutory responsibilities)</i>	Service Manager review completed. Position of Community Safety Officer deleted which contributed to saving of £63,000 reported previously. Work attaching to Community Safety Officer now undertaken by Partnership Intervention Manager, with dedicated admin support and significant input from Legal Team into safeguarding issues and domestic homicide reviews. Operational arrangements of Community Safety Partnership reviewed with a single Strategy & Delivery Group now responsible for setting strategy and monitoring action.
O.2	Health & Leisure Centres <i>Set financial targets and scope service delivery review to challenge existing arrangements and maximise outcomes for the council and the customer in the longer term</i>	Scoping of the fundamental review will be reported to EMT in March 2017 and will set out the objectives and approach to the review. The review will be undertaken in 2017/18 and will develop a feasibility report for the 'preferred' options arising from the scoping.
O.8	Community Grants <i>Review financial support and partnership working with community groups</i>	Completed A review has been undertaken of the arrangements for community grants which has made the process more transparent with greater engagement.

2.2 The savings identified to date are annual and ongoing and amount to £446,000. This will directly contribute to the funding shortfall identified in the medium term financial plan.

2.3 Reviews will continue to be monitored and reported upon to ensure they are progressing and that objectives of the review are being met.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 A clear focus of the reviews is continued financial responsibility with a view to easing funding pressures.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel note the progress updates contained within this report.

For Further Information Please Contact:

Rebecca Drummond
Service Manager – Business Improvement
and Customer Services
Tel: 023 8028 5588
E Mail: rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers

Key Action and Service Review Programme
Report – EMT Nov 2016
Our corporate plan 2016-2020 Delivery Plan
Cabinet Report Feb 2016

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 9 MARCH 2017
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 14 MARCH 2017
CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 16 MARCH 2017

THE HOUSING WHITE PAPER

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the forward to this paper the Prime Minister says that “Our broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. We need to build many more houses, of the type people want to live in, in the places they want to live. To do so requires a comprehensive approach that tackles failure at every point in the system”.

1.2 The paper sets out its proposals in four sections:-

- Planning for the right homes in the right places
- Building homes faster
- Diversifying the market
- Helping people now

It is a consultation document and the answers to 38 set questions are required by 2 May 2017.

1.3 This paper looks at the main issues raised which are most relevant from this Council’s perspective. It provides a commentary on those matters and may help formulate a response to the consultation in due course.

2.0 MAIN PROPOSALS

2.1 There is an introductory section to the White Paper which sets out the scale of the problem and says that the Government cannot solve it alone. It says that it is vital to have local leadership and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders including local authorities, private developers, housing associations, lenders and local communities. In particular, the Government expect local authorities to be as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area. It talks about bespoke deals for innovative schemes, that all authorities must have up-to-date development plans and deal with planning applications promptly. It expects local authorities to hold up their end of the bargain, but if they do not the Government will intervene.

Commentary

Is this Council being innovative enough in getting new houses built in our area? We have a strategy for building, or acquiring new Council houses in our area but could we

be doing more to promote housing association development or other forms of housing tenure built in our area?

3.0 PLANNING FOR THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

- 3.1 A large part of this section is about Councils getting up-to-date Local Plans approved to reflect the Government's requirement that much more housing land is allocated for development. These plans must then be reviewed at least once every 5 years. To help with this process the Government will consult on introducing a standardised national approach to assessing the housing requirements of individual areas and this will be in place by April 2018. This will remove the option of taking different approaches to this issue which results; for example, in our consultation draft Local Plan talking about this Council's "Objectively Assessed Need" being between 11,740 and 13,740 new houses over 20 years.

Commentary

We are currently on track to produce a new Local Plan for submission within the Government's timetable to avoid intervention and we have been fortunate, to date, in not facing appeal pressures to release land for housing outside of the Local Plan process (with one exception). If we allow the timetable to slip, or submit a plan which is substantially below our needs, this situation is likely to change very quickly. This would result in major implications for the workload of the planning department and could result in a lot of poor quality new development missing opportunities to negotiate improved infrastructure.

- 3.2 The White Paper also expects Local Plans to have clear policies for addressing the housing requirements of groups with particular needs such as older and disabled people. It also talks about making land ownership and interests more transparent by improving the Land Registry and changing contractual arrangements used to control land.
- 3.3 Priority should be given to bringing brownfield land forward for housing development, with a presumption in favour of this. There are opportunities, the White Paper says, to go further to meet needs in rural areas and to increase the supply of land to small and medium sized house builders. This is supported by the new Community Housing Fund (CHF).

Commentary

NFDC has been allocated up to nearly £1m from the CHF and separate paper will bring forward ideas for how this funding can be used.

4.0 GREEN BELT

- 4.1 The White Paper says that it continues the Government's commitment to protect the Green Belt but there is an interesting, and perhaps significant, change in the wording. It says, (my emphasis), that national policy will be amended to make clear that authorities **should** amend Green Belt boundaries **only** when they have fully examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements including brownfield sites, underused land, optimising densities and exploring whether other authorities can help to meet unmet need in a particular area. It also says that Green Belt released in one place should be compensated by enhancement in other areas and that the detailed boundaries of a Green Belt can be set in neighbourhood plans.

Commentary

The approach we are taking to the Green Belt review in our proposals to move the Local Plan forward is consistent with this new guidance.

- 4.2 The Government has reaffirmed their commitment to Neighbourhood Planning and has said they will bring forward legislative change, more funding and new guidance to support this. They consider that such plans should contain detailed design guidance so that there is a clear basis on which future decisions can be made.
- 4.3 A section of the Paper then refers to using land more efficiently for development. This means avoiding building houses at low densities where there is a shortage of land to meet demand and looking for high density options in urban areas that are well served by public transport such as railway stations. It also talks about ensuring that the density and form of development reflects the character, accessibility and infrastructure capacity of an area.

5.0 BUILDING HOMES FASTER

- 5.1 This section starts by identifying that there is often a substantial time lag between planning permission being granted and houses being built. Two of the main reasons for this are perceived to be unnecessary delays caused by (too many) planning conditions being imposed and a skills shortage in the construction sector. The first issue will be tackled by trying to limit the number of conditions imposed by requiring developer agreement and considering options for reforming the system of developer contributions. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments are to be reviewed as they are not working as well as expected and Section 106 agreement mechanisms could be changed, particularly to deal with financial viability issues. Skill shortages in the construction industry will be tackled through more training in those areas with recruitment difficulties and developers are expected to play their full part in this.
- 5.2 A shortage of skilled resources in planning departments will be addressed by increasing planning fees by 20% in July 2017 if an authority pledges to invest the extra

money in their planning department. A further 20% increase will be considered for authorities delivering the homes that their communities require.

- 5.3 The Government will target the £2.3bn Housing Infrastructure Fund in the areas of highest housing need. This will target the provision of infrastructure (including transport and utilities) where this money will unlock the provision of new homes. Bids from local authorities or groups of authorities will be welcomed. The first year of this scheme is 2017 and it will run for four years. The paper also talks about requiring local authorities to have policies to ensure that high quality digital infrastructure is provided in new homes and ensuring that utility companies do not delay development by not investing in their infrastructure in a timely way.
- 5.4 Developers will be required to make available more information about the rate at which they are building out the sites which they control and there will be a consultation on whether they might be penalised, for example by the refusal of further planning permissions to them, if they have not implemented previous permissions. There will also be a consultation on whether planning permission should be granted for two and not three years to encourage quicker implementation. Planning authorities will be given simpler powers to require the completion of developments which have started and then stopped and consulted on whether Councils should be encouraged to use their compulsory purchase powers to support the build out of stalled sites.
- 5.5 A new housing delivery test will be introduced for local authorities. The logic of this is that Councils not only have to grant planning permissions for new homes but they will also have to ensure that builders deliver them at the annual rate set out in the Local Plan. This will be enforced by requiring Councils to allocate more land for development if the annual building rate is below the Local Plan target even though they think they have allocated enough land for it to be achieved. The Government say that both Councils and housebuilders need to be held to account to ensure the building of the number of new houses which are needed.

Commentary

The issue of planning conditions needs either developers to improve the information they submit or the system to be simplified to remove some of the requirements. The review of CIL and Section 106 agreements is to be welcomed. CIL is not delivering the infrastructure which is needed.

The extra fee income is to be welcomed because planning departments will need significant additional resources to deliver the new responsibilities which they are being given and to deal with the extra workload that many new residential applications will require. New Forest District Council will face this issue later this year.

This Council needs to understand and develop its role in bidding for new infrastructure funding to ensure that this area gets access to the public resources available to support the building of many new houses.

The housing delivery test responsibilities on local authorities seems to be unreasonable. Yes, we should grant permissions in a timely way and not overburden them with conditions. But, if a developer or landowner chooses not to build, surely it is not fair for the local authority to be penalised for this. There should be a better response to dealing with unreasonable land banking by developers and landowners.

6.0 DIVERSIFYING THE MARKET

- 6.1 This section starts by setting out that the Government believe that the way in which the house building market operates constrains the supply of new homes because there is insufficient competition and innovation.
- 6.2 The new Accelerated Construction programme will help to diversify the market through partnering with small and medium sized firms as development partners and contractors. The Government will partner with local authorities to help them bring forward their own sites more quickly than they could otherwise. They will also promote custom and self-builders through the sites register and continuing exemptions from CIL payments, as well as working with lenders to make funding more readily available.
- 6.3 The Government want to attract more institutional investment in building more homes for rent. They will change the National Policy Planning Framework to make it easier for Build-to-Rent developers to offer affordable private rental homes instead of other types of affordable housing. They will also ensure that family friendly tenancies of three or more years are available.
- 6.4 Housing associations have a vital role to play if we are to build the new homes we need. The Government will encourage them to do more by setting out a rent policy after 2020 (but there will be no change to the annual 1% reduction before then), treat them as being in the private sector with changes to their regulation, urge them to do more building and to improve their efficiency.
- 6.5 Local authorities should be backed and assisted to build more houses. They should use innovative new models such as local housing companies and/or joint venture models in building mixed sites which include new market housing for sale and rent as well as affordable housing. Tailored support packages will be available to Councils who want to build on their own land at pace.

“However, we want to see tenants that local authorities place in new affordable properties offered equivalent terms to those in Council housing, including a right to buy their home.”

- 6.6 The house building industry should be made more productive. In particular it should increase innovation and make greater use of modern methods of construction including homes constructed off-site.

Commentary

The concept of private institutional developers providing affordable housing for rent, as an alternative to other forms of affordable housing, is an interesting one but which needs very careful consideration of the details when they emerge.

The encouragement of local authorities to build more and for them to use innovative new models to do so is something that this Council is already committed to looking at. It will be a disappointment to some that the Government have retained their commitment to new Council developed property having to be sold to tenants at a discount.

7.0 HELPING PEOPLE NOW

- 7.1 This section sets out in its introduction that while the Government's main focus is on fixing the housing market in the long term', there is also clearly a need to intervene to help those who are struggling now. The first part describes the continuation and extension of some existing measures such as saving to raise a deposit and equity loans.
- 7.2 Starter homes remain an important part of the strategy but will not be a mandatory requirement on all new larger development sites. Where they are proposed there will be a 15 year period in which some or all of the discount must be repaid and they will not be available to cash buyers. They should be provided as part of a mixed package of affordable housing and the NPPF will be amended to ensure that all new housing sites are expected to deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units. It will be clarified that starter homes, with appropriate local connection tests, will be acceptable on rural exception sites.
- 7.3 The paper confirms that the pilots allowing housing association tenants to buy their homes will continue to be rolled out with right to buy discounts. Extra money has been allocated to the affordable housing programme and this has been expanded to include Rent to Buy homes and affordable rent products.
- 7.4 Measures are set out to remove the worst landlords from operating, making tenancies more family friendly and tackling unfair and unreasonable abuses of leasehold. The paper then refers to the Community Housing Fund which is supporting communities taking the lead in building homes particularly in areas affected by second homes. Returning to the planning side, the Government will be introducing a new statutory duty on Councils to ensure that their Local Plans meet the needs of older and disabled people.
- 7.5 The final part of this section is entitled preventing homelessness. Legislation will be introduced placing a duty on local authorities to take steps to prevent eligible people from being made homeless when they are threatened by this possibility

Commentary

We should welcome the dropping of the requirement to insist on 20% of starter homes on all large sites as this allows for a wider range of affordable options to be considered. Nevertheless, I think that they should still be a significant part of the District Council's affordable housing policy moving forward, along with affordable rent and shared ownership options. The Council will need to make important decisions soon about the balance it will be seeking to achieve.

It will be disappointing to some that the Government is still pursuing the sale of housing association properties to tenants if this is still linked with the Council having to sell its higher value assets when they become available.

While there is no detail of how the new duty to prevent eligible people being made homeless this could be a very onerous requirement on our housing needs team. We are struggling to deal with our existing duties to deal with people made homeless and so it is difficult to see how this new duty will operate if no more homes are available.

8.0 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

8.1 The Annex to the White Paper sets out a total of 38 questions to which the Government invite responses by 2 May 2017. This Council's response will be through a joint portfolio holder decision by the Housing and Communities and the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holders. There will be matters of interest to Environment, Communities and possibly the Corporate Overview Panels, as well as the Planning Development Control Committee, in this White Paper.

9.0 CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Review Panels consider the contents of the White Paper and offer comments to the portfolio holders which can help inform their response to the consultation process.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Chris Elliott,
Executive Head, Economy Housing and Planning
Tel: 023 8028 5588
E-mail: chris.elliott@nfdc.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Published Documents

This page is intentionally left blank

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 16 MARCH 2017

WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	TIMING
MARCH 2017			
Improving Customer Services	Various means of improving customer service	Task and Finish Group/officer work	Scoping report agreed by Panel on 22 September 2016. Report back to March COSP
Building Works Review	Scoping		March 2017
“Care sector” A very major sector that has been overlooked. Of great relevance to the area. Needs greater levels of support.	To identify the value of the sector to the local economy and identify means to develop the skills base; supply chain and in-sector collaboration so as to further the sector. Scoping document	Officer report	March 2017
MAY 2017			
Annual Financial Review Report		Officer written report	25 May 2017
Key Actions and Service Review Update	To note progress	Officer report	25 May 2017
Performance Indicators	Annual Performance Report for services	Officer report	25 May 2017
SEPTEMBER 2017			
Financial Monitoring Report and Medium Term Financial Plan		Officer written report	21 September 2017
NOVEMBER 2017			
Financial Monitoring and Medium Term Financial Plan		Officer written report	16 November 2017

ITEMS BELOW NOT YET TIMETABLED OR ARE ONGOING			
Electoral Review	To consider whether the Council should request the LGBCE to undertake an electoral review	Task and Finish Group	Ongoing
<p>“Marine and Engineering”</p> <p>A high value sector which has a number of established and substantial businesses in the District</p>	To assist in the development of this and other sectors, encouraging co-operation and assisting with access to trade fairs	Report to Panel	To be revised after a review of the Business and Tourism Service Ongoing
<p>“Regions”</p> <p>Continue engagement/ collaboration with HCC/LEPS or any other external public agency, including reference to the Hampshire-wide devolution proposal</p>	To effectively facilitate good relationships with these agencies in order to produce beneficial outcomes in the District	Report documenting progress with LEPs and business portal. HCC element via Leader updates.	To be revisited in the context of the review of the Business and Tourism Service Review
Access to alternative funding sources for voluntary organisations and parish/town councils	To explore opportunities	Officer written report	2016/17 committee cycle
Devolution – Wider Hampshire	Monitor progress with regard to devolution	Regular update from Leader	At appropriate times
Universal Credit update	To be aware of issues arising	Regular update from Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder	At appropriate times
Portfolio Holders' Updates (Standing Item) Updates from Task and Finish Groups			