

## NOTICE OF MEETING

**Meeting:** CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date and Time:** THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2021, AT 9.30 AM\*

**Place:** COUNCIL CHAMBER - APPLETREE COURT, BEAULIEU  
ROAD, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

**Enquiries to:** Email: [andy.rogers@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:andy.rogers@nfdc.gov.uk)  
Andy Rogers Tel: 023 8028 5070

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Members of the public may watch this meeting live on the [Council's website](#).

\*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 Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny 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 no later than 12.00 noon on Monday, 15 November 2021.

**Colin Read**  
Interim Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA  
[www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk)

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

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## AGENDA

### **Apologies**

#### **1. MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 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. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' REPORTS**

To receive an oral update from the Portfolio Holders for Corporate Affairs, Finance, Corporate Services & Improvement and Local Economic Development, Property & Innovation on developments within their Portfolio areas.

**5. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/23 (Pages 5 - 12)**

To receive the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and to make a recommendation to Cabinet.

**6. COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM AND CARE LEAVER DISREGARD (Pages 13 - 16)**

To receive the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and to make recommendations to the Cabinet.

**7. UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE**

To receive an update.

**8. FINANCIAL STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FINAL REPORT (Pages 17 - 28)**

To receive the report of the Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group.

**9. THE NEW FOREST LABOUR MARKET PROFILE (Pages 29 - 36)**

To note headline labour market data relating to the New Forest economy.

**10. SUMMARY OF WELCOME BACK FUND EXPENDITURE (Pages 37 - 40)**

To note the projects delivered to date and future planned projects to be funded through the Welcome Back Fund.

**11. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 41 - 42)**

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.

**12. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

To:

**Councillors**

Alexis McEvoy (Chairman)  
Alan Alvey (Vice-Chairman)  
Fran Carpenter  
Keith Craze  
Jack Davies

**Councillors**

Alison Hoare  
Mahmoud Kangarani  
Martyn Levitt  
Alan O'Sullivan  
Derek Tipp

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## CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 NOVEMBER 2021

### COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/23

#### 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommends to Cabinet that option A, B, C and D as detailed in Section 6 are adopted from 1 April 2022.
- 1.2 That a Task and Finish Group review a Banded scheme during 2022, along with the vulnerable category with any proposals for change to take effect from 1 April 2023.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Members will recall that local authorities are responsible for setting up 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. Currently, there are currently no plans to include Council Tax Reduction within Universal Credit.
- 2.2 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme must be formally made by the Council no later than 11 March in any year, to take effect from 1 April.
- 2.3 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme fulfils the prescribed requirements for localised schemes.
- 2.4 There are currently 8,234 claimants receiving Council Tax Reduction. Of these 4,334 are working age and 3,900 are of pensionable age. See Appendix 1 for caseload trend.
- 2.5 The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme costs approximately £9.2 million. This is split between:

Working Age	£4,524,959
Pensioner	£4,682,496

The cost is shared between all precepting authorities.

- 2.6 The amount of Council Tax Reduction awarded affects the tax base of each organisation and is not identified within the overall formula grant allocation.

#### 3. REVIEW PROCESS

- 3.1 The Task & Finish Group met to review the current scheme and proposed changes effective from 1 April 2022.
- 3.2 The recommendations of the Task & Finish Group are to be considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Panel, the Cabinet and full Council in December 2021.

#### **4. THE CURRENT LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

- 4.1 The council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme protects the vulnerable. A person is vulnerable if they (or a partner) are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Severe Disablement Allowance.
- 4.2 The council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 requires all working age claimants (except the vulnerable) to pay a minimum of 10% council tax.
- 4.3 The council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme also includes:
- Council Tax Reductions are capped at band D (so that claimants living in higher banded properties receive any reduction based on band D).
  - A savings limit of £6,000, 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 £25.00 a week of earnings. For comparison purposes, the government disregards in Housing Benefit are £25.00 for a lone parent, £20.00 for a disabled claimant, £10.00 for a couple and £5.00 for a single claimant.

#### **5. MATTERS CONSIDERED BY TASK & FINISH GROUP**

- 5.1 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 2021/22 council tax bills increased by an average of 5%, meaning council tax payers having to pay more. This is likely to continue in the forthcoming years.
- 5.2 The Council Tax in-year collection rate for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, who are not a pensioner or vulnerable, has reduced slightly from 80.20% to 79.72% and overall in year collection rate for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction increased from 89.83% to 91.95%. See Appendix 2 for collection figures.
- 5.3 Many of the claimants have also been affected by other welfare reform changes, including Universal Credit, as well as an increase in the cost of living, in particular fuel and food inflation which adversely affects low income households, and that the impact of the pandemic is still being felt.

#### **6. DISCUSSION ON COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2022/23**

- 6.1 The group considered reviewing various aspects of the current scheme. This included:
- the 10% minimum contribution
  - the Band D cap
- 6.2 The Group discussed these aspects and agreed to maintain these aspects of the scheme and not to propose any changes.
- 6.3 The Group also discussed a Banded scheme and recommended a fundamental full review of this be undertaken in 2022.

6.4 The Group discussed four proposed changes, primarily to utilise automation to ease administration for both the Council and the claimant. The proposed changes are summarised as follows:

	Description	No of claims affected	Financial impact
A	To extend the backdating period of 3 months to 6 months	Minimal	Minimal
B	To treat a Universal Credit notification as a claim for Council Tax Reduction	All new claims from 1 April	Minimal
C	To reduce the number of Non-dependent deductions to 2	200	£40,000
D	To align Child Care Costs with Universal Credit	67	Minimal

6.5 The Group discussed the reasons and impact of the proposed changes:

**A. To extend the backdate period from 3 to 6 months**

Where a claimant has delayed in making their claim and there is continuous “good cause” their claim can be backdated for a period of up to 3 months. The Group discussed extending this time period to provide additional support to vulnerable claimants who, in exceptional circumstances, delayed making their claim, and who otherwise would have to pay their council tax for the period. Although the number of claims who will benefit from this will be minimal, it will provide much needed additional financial support.

The Group agreed to consult on extending the backdate period to 6 months.

**B. To treat a Universal Credit notification as a new claim**

Currently we receive notifications from the Department for Work and Pensions when a claimant is awarded Universal Credit. To encourage a claim for Council Tax Reduction an email is sent to the claimant with a link to our eform. On receiving the completed eform all details are manually inputted into our Benefits system. This proposal will utilise Universal Credit data and automate the process, so that information is imported directly into the Benefits system, reducing administration and improving take-up of Council Tax Reduction as claimants will not need to make a full new claim.

The Group agreed to consult on treating the Universal Credit notification as a new claim for Council Tax Reduction.

**C. To reduce the number of Non-dependent deductions categories to 2**

Non-dependents are adults living with the claimant, and, depending on their income, an amount is deducted from the claimants weekly Council Tax Reduction. There are currently 5 levels of Non-dependent deductions, ranging from £0 to £12.45 per week. The Group discussed reducing the number of deductions to 2, 1 for those in work (currently £4.05), and 1 for those out of work (currently no deduction). The purpose of this is to reduce administration, as any changes to earnings will not affect entitlement,

overpayments, and to support claimants who have to pay the amount deducted and have to report changes, which they may not be aware of.

The Group agreed to consult on reducing the number of Non-dependent deductions to 2.

#### **D. To align Child Care Costs disregards with Universal Credit**

Where a claimant is working more than 16 hours and pays child care costs, these costs are disregarded from the claimants earnings, up to specified thresholds of either £175, for one child, or £300 per week for more than one child.

We currently get notified of any changes to child care costs from Department for Work and Pensions where a claimant is receiving Universal Credit. However, Universal Credit use a lower amount of child care disregard, which is 85% of the amounts disregarded in Council Tax Reduction. As the disregard amounts differ, manual calculations and adjustments to claims are required each month as Universal Credit awards fluctuate each month. The Group discussed the impact on existing claimants, as some will be worse off, predominantly minimally by a reduction in entitlement of less than £1 a week, however some claimants will lose up to £5 per week. The Group wanted to protect this group so that the change will only apply to new claims from 1 April 2022.

The Group agreed to consult on aligning Child Care Cost disregards with Universal Credit for Council Tax Reduction new claims.

- 6.6 The Group were made aware of the Exceptional Hardship Payment scheme which is available to support any claimant in financial hardship with paying their Council Tax due to a shortfall in their Council Tax Reduction.
- 6.7 After considering these options the Group decided to consult on the above proposed changes.

#### **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Council has a duty to consult on any changes to the scheme. The Council undertook a consultation exercise over a 6 week period, from 30 August 2021 to 10 October 2021, advertising on the council's website, Facebook page and on decision notices, as well as contacting partner organisations, including Citizens Advice New Forest.
- 7.2 The Council only received 32 responses, all strongly agreeing or agreeing with the options. However, due to the minimal response it is not possible to determine any conclusions.
- 7.3 After considering the consultation responses, the Group recommended proposals A to D as changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme from 1 April 2022. The Group also discussed including a review of the vulnerable category in 2022, in particular family carers.

#### **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The financial implications of each of the options were discussed.

Option A – the cost of this will be minimal. Any cost may be offset by the administration involved in collecting any council tax arrears.

Option B – this will provide savings in administration

Option C – the cost will be approximately £40,000 but there will be savings in administration

Option D – as this will only affect new claims there will be no impact on existing claims. However, there will be reduced administration costs.

8.2 Therefore, the overall impact of these changes will be minimal. The implications to New Forest District Council will be even smaller as the council retains approximately 10% of the total council tax collected.

**9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS / DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are none

**10. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Our Council Tax Reduction scheme continues to support those on a low income.

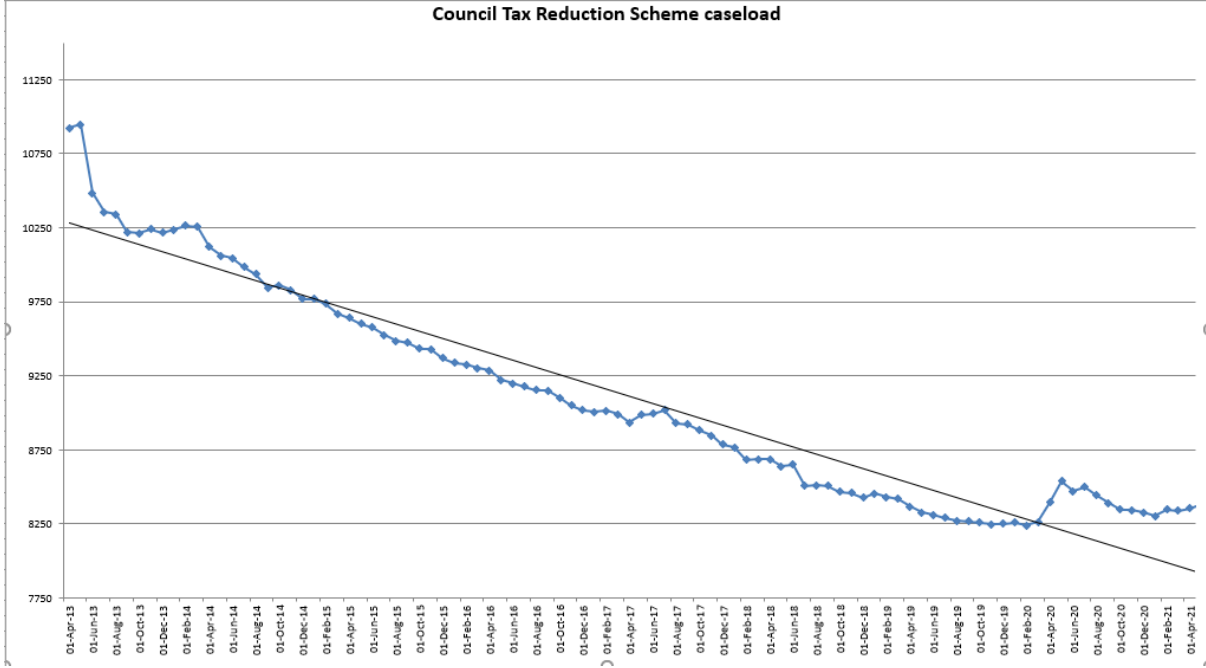
**For further Information Contact:**

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**Background Papers:**

Minutes of Task & Finish Group

Council Tax Reduction Caseload



## Council Tax collection statistics

## POSITION STATEMENT AS AT 31.3.21

	Nett Amount Due	Total Amount Paid	Outstanding Balance	Collection %
<b>ALL DEBT</b>	<b>£132,030,091.36</b>	<b>129,740,871</b>	<b>2,289,220.78</b>	<b>98.27%</b>
<b>REDUCTION SCHEMES</b>				
<b>WORKING AGE EMPLOYED</b>	384,156.08	314,896.70	69,259.38	81.97%
<b>WORKING AGE OTHER</b>	353,026.39	272,756.89	80,269.50	77.26%
<b>WORKING AGE CLAIMANT - MAXIMUM REDUCTION CAPPED AT 90%</b>	<b>£737,182.47</b>	<b>587,653.59</b>	<b>149,528.88</b>	<b>79.72%</b>
<b>PENSION AGE</b>	£810,082.70	826,354.22	-16,271.52	102.01%
<b>VULNERABLE</b>	£106,658.25	106,794.85	-136.60	100.13%
<b>PROTECTED ENTITLEMENT (PENSION AGE AND VULNERABLE) - NO MAXIMUM CAP</b>	<b>£916,740.95</b>	<b>933,149.07</b>	<b>£-16,408.12</b>	<b>101.79%</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>				
<b>ALL REDUCTION SCHEME CASES</b>	<b>£1,653,923.42</b>	<b>£1,520,802.66</b>	<b>£133,120.76</b>	<b>91.95%</b>
<b>ALL NON-REDUCTION SCHEME CASES</b>	<b>£130,376,167.94</b>	<b>£128,220,067.92</b>	<b>£2,156,100.02</b>	<b>98.35%</b>

**POSITION STATEMENT AS AT  
31.3.20**

	<b>Nett Amount Due</b>	<b>Total Amount Paid</b>	<b>Outstanding Balance</b>	<b>Collection %</b>
<b>ALL DEBT</b>	<b>£127,413,803.62</b>	<b>125,684,949</b>	<b>£ ,728,854.91</b>	<b>98.64%</b>
<b>REDUCTION SCHEMES</b>				
<b>WORKING AGE EMPLOYED</b>	£ 615,136.30	502,194.35	112,941.95	81.64%
<b>WORKING AGE OTHER</b>	£ 569,894.59	448,173.22	121,721.37	78.64%
<b>WORKING AGE CLAIMANT - MAXIMUM REDUCTION CAPPED AT 90%</b>	<b>£1,185,030.89</b>	<b>£950,367.57</b>	<b>£234,663.32</b>	<b>80.20%</b>
<b>PENSION AGE</b>	£841,892.88	£863,971.27	-£22,078.39	102.62%
<b>VULNERABLE</b>	£133,132.20	£126,114.88	£7,017.32	94.73%
<b>PROTECTED ENTITLEMENT (PENSION AGE AND VULNERABLE) - NO MAXIMUM CAP</b>	<b>£ 975,025.08</b>	<b>£990,086.15</b>	<b>-£15,061.07</b>	<b>101.54%</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>				
<b>ALL REDUCTION SCHEME CASES</b>	<b>£2,160,055.97</b>	<b>£1,940,453.72</b>	<b>£219,602.25</b>	<b>89.83%</b>
<b>ALL NON-REDUCTION SCHEME CASES</b>	<b>£125,253,747.65</b>	<b>£123,744,494.99</b>	<b>£1,509,252.66</b>	<b>98.80%</b>

## COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM AND CARE LEAVER DISREGARD

### 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommends to Cabinet the following:
- a) that the empty homes premium is increased from 150% to 200% for properties that have been vacant and unfurnished for more than five years, and
  - b) that the empty homes premium is increased from 150% to 300% for properties that have been vacant and unfurnished for more than ten years, and
  - c) where a property is subject to an empty homes premium and a new owner becomes liable for council tax, they will be exempt from the premium for a six-month period, and
  - d) the adoption of a care leaver disregard for care leavers aged under 25

### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Council Tax Reduction Task and Finish Group on Council Tax Empty Homes Premium and a care leaver disregard for council tax purposes.
- 2.2 The effective date of any change would be 1 April 2022.

### 3. EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM

- 3.1 The government have stated that they “want to address the issue of empty properties. It can’t be right to leave a property empty when so many are desperate for a place to live”. Two years is considered sufficient time for homeowners to sell, rent or complete any major renovations that might be required, and the premium seeks to incentivise owners to bring their properties back into use.
- 3.2 Under the Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Bill 2018, from April 2019 local authorities have the discretion to charge up to 100% council tax premium on properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 2 years, thereby doubling the council tax on a property.
- 3.3 The government introduced additional changes so that:
- From April 2020, local authorities can charge up to 200% council tax premium on properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 5 years
  - From April 2021 local authorities can charge a premium of up to 300% on properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 10 years
- 3.4 There are certain exemptions in place for properties that are empty due to the occupant living in armed forces accommodation for job-related purposes, or to annexes being used as part of the main property. While not an exemption, guidance states that consideration should be given for properties which are genuinely for sale or available to rent, and that owners should not be penalised in cases of hardship. These decisions are be made on a case-by-case basis and regularly reviewed.

#### 4. OUR CURRENT POLICY

- 4.1 The aim of introducing the Empty Homes Premiums is to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.
- 4.2 Tackling empty homes is part of our emerging Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy and the Private Sector Housing and Revenues teams work together. The council's Private Sector Leasing Scheme is promoted on any Empty Home Premium communication.
- 4.3 If an unoccupied and substantially unfurnished property is furnished, such that it is capable of being lived in, a premium does not apply.
- 4.4 For properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 2 years, the council introduced an Empty Homes Premium of 50% from 2019, and increased this to 100% from April 2020.
- 4.5 For properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 5 years, the council considered an incremental approach and introduced an Empty Homes Premium of 150% from April 2020, with a recommendation to review this in 2020 and consider if the premium should be increased to 200%. Due to the pandemic the Empty Homes Premium remained unchanged from 1 April 2021.
- 4.6 The Empty Homes Premiums can be summarised as follows:

Conditions	Premium applicable from 1 April 2019	Premium applicable from 1 April 2020	Premium applicable from 1 April 2021
Empty for 2 years or more	50%	100%	100%
Empty for more than 5 years	50%	150%	150%
Empty for more than 10 years	50%	150%	150%

- 4.7 The current number of empty properties subject to the empty homes premium and the level of discretion available are summarised as follows:

Conditions	Discretion available	Current premium applied by NFDC	Quantity
Vacant for 2 years or more	Up to 100%	100%	91
Vacant for more than 5 years	Up to 200%	150%	29
Vacant for more than 10 years	Up to 300%	150%	11

(Quantities are based on figures as at 21 August 2021)

#### 5. TASK AND FINISH GROUP DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The Task and Finish Group discussed increasing the premium to 200% where a property has been vacant and unfurnished for more than five years and to 300% where a property has been vacant and unfurnished for more than 10 years to encourage properties to become occupied.
- 5.2 Currently, there are 29 properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 5 years and 11 for more than 10 years.

- 5.3 To encourage properties to be brought back into use, the Task and Finish Group recommend:
- a) increasing the premium from 150% to 200% where a property has been vacant and unfurnished for more than 5 years and
  - b) increasing the premium from 150% to 300% where a property has been vacant and unfurnished for more than 10 years.
- 5.4 The additional council tax charged would be approximately £24,000 and £32,000 respectively. Therefore, the potential additional total income could be circa £56,000 of which £5,600 would come to NFDC. However, if proposals are successful and properties are brought back into use the additional income could overall be less.
- 5.5 The Group were mindful of the impact of the premium on new owners of a property that has been subject to the premium and where the property remains vacant and unfurnished, and who are seeking to bring the property back into use. In these circumstances an exemption will be applied and be kept under regular review.
- 5.6 If the recommendations are approved, all affected taxpayers who will be liable to the increased premiums from 1 April 2022 will be notified in writing as soon as practically possible. Information promoting our Private Sector Leasing scheme will again be included in the letter.

## 6. CARE LEAVER DISREGARD

- 6.1 From 1 April 2020 to support the Government's "Keep on caring" strategy the Council introduced a council tax exemption for Care Leavers solely liable to pay council tax or where there is more than one occupier and all the occupiers are Care Leavers, aged under 25. Care Leavers are adults who have spent time in foster or residential care, or in other arrangements outside their immediate or extended family, before the age of 18.
- 6.2 The Group discussed introducing a new council tax person disregard so that there is a disregarded for council tax purposes to care leavers aged under 25. This will provide support to those liable to pay council tax where they were previously entitled to a 25% single person discount which no longer applies as the care leaver has reached the age of 18 and does not fall into any of the other disregard categories, for example a student, or where the person liable for council tax provides accommodation to a Care Leaver over the age of 18.
- 6.3 The Council has no accurate information on how many council tax payers this would affect as there is no requirement to disclose this information, but it is likely to be a small number.
- 6.4 The disregard is permitted under S13A Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 6.5 The Group recommend that a care leaver disregard be introduced from 1 April 2022.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The financial implications of each of the above are:

**Empty Homes Premium** – Increasing the premium to 200% for properties which have been vacant and unfurnished for more than 5 years could increase income by £24,000 and Increasing the premium to 300% for properties which have been vacant and unfurnished for more than 10 years could increase income by £32,000, of which the council's share is 10%. However, as stated, the aim is to encourage properties to be brought back into use so if the proposals are successful then there may be a reduction in long term empty properties so a reduction in current income.

**Care Leaver Disregard** – Implementing a care leavers disregard will be a cost to the council, however numbers are expected to be small.

**8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS / DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are none.

**9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Implementing a Care Leavers disregard will provide support to households with a care leaver aged under 25.

**For further Information Contact:**

Ryan Stevens  
Service Manager – Revenues and Benefits  
[ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

Minutes of Task & Finish Group

## CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 NOVEMBER 2021

### FINANCIAL STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP – FINAL REPORT

#### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the report and endorse the follow up actions for carrying through to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

#### 2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The Financial Strategy Task & Finish Group has reviewed the Council's financial strategy and has sought to understand how the plans and assumptions made by the Portfolio Holders marry up with the overarching financial planning of the Council. This report presents the findings of the Group

#### 3. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

##### 3.1 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group were:

*'To gather an understanding of how the Council's overall financial strategy brings together various financial workstreams. This includes income maximisation and prioritisation of resources to ensure the delivery of the Council's priorities, and to challenge how the plans and assumptions made by the Portfolio Holders fit with the overall strategy.'*

##### 3.2 Membership of Group

Cllr Alan Alvey  
Cllr Sue Bennison  
Cllr Rebecca Clark  
Cllr Keith Craze (Chairman)  
Cllr Philip Dowd  
Cllr Emma Lane  
Cllr Alexis E McEvoy  
Cllr A O'Sullivan

##### 3.3 The Work of the Group

Members of the task and finish group were provided with detailed budgets, programmes and corporate plan items for each portfolio.

#### 4. FINDINGS OF THE TASK & FINISH GROUP

- 4.1 Having received an overview of the Council's budget, including the latest forecast Medium term Financial Position and recently adopted Corporate Plan priorities, generic and tailored questions were asked of each Portfolio Holder. The generic questions were designed to probe the Portfolio Holders on;

- plans relating to the alignment of NFDC financial resources to their Corporate Plan priorities,
- the scale and focus of any reviews intended to contribute to the Council's medium term financial deficit
- the Portfolio Holders' aspirations when it comes to partnership working, to gauge
- the opportunities and threats to increased sustainability in service delivery, to understand
- plans for income maximisation and new generation
- key learning from the past 18 months and how this can shape service delivery going forward.

4.2 A number of tailored questions were put to the individual Portfolio Holders reflecting the nature of their Portfolios and the particular nuances and specific priorities.

4.3 A selection of issues discussed from each portfolio is highlighted below, including proposed follow up actions.

#### 4.4 Leader

A review had been completed recently to increase the resources within Communications. There was minimal scope to reduce costs within the remaining services contained within the Portfolio budget, although efforts had been made to streamline elections and electoral role processes using technology.

The Leader commented that the Climate and Nature Emergency gave the Council an excellent opportunity to partner and collaborate with other authorities, especially the County Council, who had already undertaken significant work in this area. The Leader was keen to ensure the culture within the organisation aligned to the need to be greener and more sustainable, with climate change at the heart of our everyday working.

The Leader spoke at length about the measures put in place by the Council to remain attractive as an employer of choice and felt confident that the Council's pro-active delivery of a new hybrid working policy would put it in a good position to continue to attract and retain high calibre employees. The Leader recognised that not every employee was able to benefit from the new policy, but no employee was worse off as a result.

The ongoing boundary review gave an opportunity to ensure fair councillor representation across the District, accepting that an increased workload was likely, but that wasn't wholly inconsistent to the workload of officers in recent years.

**4.4.1 Action to follow up: A follow up report be presented to the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel 12 months after the recruitment of the additional Communications resource, to provide feedback on the additional activities as a result of the increased investment in this area.**

**4.4.2 Action to follow up: The Group requested that the impending report due to February Cabinet on the Nature and Climate Change next steps, clearly lay out intentions for the ongoing monitoring of actions.**

## **4.5 Finance, Investment and Corporate Services**

The Portfolio Holder commented that service reviews would be undertaken as and when opportunities arose, and this was supported by 2 recent reviews which had been undertaken, saving the Council £66,000 per annum. The new ICT manager would have renewed focus on the revenue implications of spend identified as necessary through the emerging ICT strategy.

Resource levels were felt to be appropriate, although KPI's could be better developed in terms of understanding the impact that investment on ICT has had to officers and residents.

It was very clear the Portfolio Holder was very willing to work in partnership, and had recently engaged in discussions to consider shared working. The existing partnerships covering Internal Audit, Treasury Management and various SLA's with the National Park Authority were given as good examples where partnerships had delivered advantages for the Council and third parties.

Measures were noted within procurement guidelines to promote the use of the local supply chain where possible. As an example of a project having increased sustainability in its forefront, the Crow Lane industrial Park project is seeking to provide a development which meets the requirements of BREEAM Very Good. BREEAM is an abbreviation of 'Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method' and is a sustainability assessment method that is used to masterplan projects and buildings. A 'Very Good' rating represents a sustainability performance in the top 25% of UK new non-domestic buildings.

The generation of new and sustained income was something that the Portfolio Holder was particularly keen on and this was demonstrated within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The shift to Hybrid ways of working would also undoubtedly have a positive impact on the Council's objective to reduce its Carbon footprint, and members were already attending informal meetings remotely using the new technology installed in meeting rooms, thus saving the Council money and reducing carbon emissions.

Members were keen to see further improvements to the ICT provision available in the committee rooms and to see increased hybrid meeting technology rolled out, pending a review of the newly installed equipment.

Regarding reserves, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council remained financially stable with very good levels of cash and reserves held. These balances were being put to good effect in financing various Capital projects, which was important for an authority with available cash in the context of a low base rate environment. One such capital project that had been budgeted for was the Hardley Depot scheme which had been paused whilst a wider strategic depot review was being undertaken to align facilities and infrastructure provision with the emerging waste strategy.

**4.5.1 Action to follow up: the next iteration of ICT strategy to include improvements to ICT provision within the Council's meeting rooms.**

**4.5.2 Action to follow up: devise new KPI's to allow for a suitable review of ICT investment Vs improvement.**

**4.5.3 Action to follow up: That a report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel covering how plans are evolving in respect of the Hardley Depot.**

**4.6 Housing and Homelessness Services**

To deliver on the priority of improving housing circumstances of those most in need, a review was expected within the Estate Management Team, which was likely to require additional resource in this area. Along this similar theme, to ensure housing standards were also high within the rented sector, a new Landlord Forum was about to be launched.

New software was currently being procured so that all our applications across Housing 'talk' to one another to move away from separate software for different functions.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the excellent progress made by the Greener Housing Task and Finish Group, looking at all aspects of greener housing, fuel poverty and what we can do, as a Housing Authority, to reduce our carbon emissions and encourage others to do so. The cost of going green was clearly a significant threat to progress when taken in the context of over 5,000 dwellings being owned by the Council. Any initiatives to make significant progress would require strong financial support from the Government and prove to represent good Value for Money.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that great strides had been made in creating additional temporary accommodation. An additional 23 units had been created especially for homeless clients. The pandemic had had a significant impact on our ability to reduce reliance on external emergency temporary accommodation, but this objective was still in the medium-term strategy.

The Council received a good level of financial support in tackling homelessness, and had employed specific outreach workers as a result. The resources would need to be aligned with grant income so it was important to maximise its use and find a longer term solution.

Over the last couple of years, the County Council had begun re reducing housing related support, specifically on homeless support. HCC continued to provide Adult Social Care, Mental Health and drug and alcohol support, which complemented District Council provision.

The Portfolio Holder commented on performance to date as against the target to acquire an additional 600 Council dwellings by 2026 and the members of the group were aware of the regular reporting on this through the Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

**4.6.1 Action to follow up: To provide an annual report through the Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the use of external emergency temporary accommodation to enable appropriate monitoring against the strategy to reduce use.**

**4.6.2 Action to follow up: To ensure the resource implications of the impending estates management review were included within the budget proposals for 2022/23.**

## 4.7 Environment and Coastal Services

The Portfolio Holder commented on the recent decision taken by the Cabinet to invest in a new operations system and confirmed the expectation that this new system would yield cashable efficiency savings as a result. The ongoing revenue costs and savings associated with the new system would be built into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

A new investment strategy for the Coast was in the early stages of development which would examine income generation to be used in the financing for coastal maintenance projects. Options would include private sector funding, income generation ideas and the potential use of CIL income.

Given the widespread HGV driver shortage and the potential financial and operational risks and implications for the Council, particularly with waste collection, it is suggested contingency plans to ensure the continuation of all service delivery be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

There were additional upfront resources required during the planning stage of the new Waste Strategy, and an amount had been set aside within the MTFP for this purpose. The Portfolio Holder stressed the importance of ensuring costs within service delivery were kept under tight control and was keen to explore any opportunity to reduce cost, or increase income to help compensate for inevitable cost increases. Partnership working with the County Council and neighbouring authorities was also going to play an important role in this.

Work will commence to see whether the Council could further benefit from formally joining a wider Coastal Partnership.

Funding was once again mentioned as a threat to increased sustainability, although several options were being considered to protect communities from rising sea levels and climate change.

Additional Electronic Vehicle Charging Points were due to be installed in more NFDC owned car parks and improved infrastructure was being considered to further encourage walking, cycling and recycling.

The Portfolio Holder commented that a modern car parking service resulting in a more cost-efficient service, had a role to play in dealing with cost pressures across the Council.

- 4.7.1 Action to follow up: Coastal Investment Strategy to be prepared and shared with the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2022/23.**
- 4.7.2 Action to follow up: A report on the 'more modern car parking service' be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Panel / Cabinet to tie in with the timeline of any proposed changes.**
- 4.7.3 Action to follow up: Works be progressed on whether the Council would benefit from formally joining a Coastal Partnership, and to feedback to Overview and Scrutiny during 2022.**
- 4.7.4 Action to follow up: That a report be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel setting out contingency plans to address the labour**

**shortage, including recruitment and retention aspects, and an indication of costs to protect the delivery of all front line operational services.**

#### **4.8 Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure**

The Portfolio holder confirmed that a project was underway to replace the legacy ICT system with a more modern equivalent, and that this was expected to yield cashable efficiency savings as a result. Increased recovery of staffing costs dealing directly with mitigation projects should also be recoverable through CIL contributions.

It was likely that additional resource would be required when larger port plans and strategic planning sites and schemes were forthcoming. The Portfolio Holder and group noted the need to resource according to the project duration and incomes received from various planning fees. To progress on the priority of delivering Town Centre Regeneration, additional resource was likely to be required in this area.

National changes to the Land Charges system would have a financial impact to this Council, likely resulting in the loss of a net income to the Council, though this was not expected to take place for 4 years.

In terms of the delivery of the Local Plan Part 2, the Portfolio Holder commented on the appropriate use of external consultants to undertake elements of this work to ensure deadlines were met, and those with the right level of expertise were called on to complete the task.

Delivering sustainable development was a core purpose of both Planning and Building Control and was both complex and highly technical. The main threat identified within the Council was around staff skills and understanding, and the cost to the developer of delivering sustainable development.

In terms of new income generation, the Portfolio holder was going to explore the potential for charging for on-line personal searches, and whether an option exists to build capacity to provide professional advice to Town and Parish Councils. Historic Developer contribution projects were identified and underway, but no formal reporting process to track progress had yet been established. This was the same for Mitigation projects. An annual Infrastructure Funding Statement would encompass CIL reporting and the Portfolio Holder commented that presentations would be given on projects to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

It was pleasing to hear that the Building Control service was performing well, with customers seemingly returning to the Council to ensure a good level of service was received.

It was clear from the Portfolio holder that a great deal of work was required in terms of bringing forward the plan to achieve the Corporate Plan Priority of setting a vision for Town Centre Regeneration.

**4.8.1 Action to follow up: Formalise and see through a mid-year and end of year reporting schedule to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panels to track progress against the Section 106 and CIL funded projects against sums available.**

**4.8.2 Action to follow up: Prepare a paper during 2022 outlining plans for Town Centre Regeneration, including an overview of the proposed**

**process, including consultation where appropriate and resource implications.**

#### **4.9 Business, Tourism and High Streets**

After a long period of holding a vacancy within the team, a successful recent recruitment exercise had been carried out so the team was now going to be at full strength. This will improve the team's ability to continue to engage with local businesses across a range of sectors across the whole of the District.

The Portfolio Holder commented that a recent High Street conference had been well attended, and that there was a clear expectation of continued, or even additional support be given by the Council.

The service worked collaboratively with the New Forest Business Partnership and Go New Forest and had also recently been successful in a joint bid with the IoW Council to the European Regional Development Fund for delivering a business support programme.

The Portfolio Holder believed there is scope to make the Council's website an income generator through sponsorship and he will be looking to take this up with the Cabinet.

When questioned on the use of KPI's to measure output, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that this was difficult considering the nature of the service, and if too much feedback was sought from business owners, they would likely detract from the service, rather than continue to engage.

The Portfolio Holder commented that the Council can and will provide guidance for local communities seeking to improve Broadband connection. This will require staff time but no other cost. All new developments are required to have Broadband connection prior to first occupation. The Council has worked with 5G providers to support installation of infrastructure

**4.9.1 Action to follow up: Portfolio Holder to feedback to the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel on his discussions with the Cabinet on the concept of corporate sponsorship on the NFDC website.**

#### **4.10 Partnering and Wellbeing**

The Portfolio Holder commented on the recent service delivery review which had resulted in significant savings and new investment being brought to the Council and its Leisure Centres, as well as safeguarding the provision of the centres for at least the next 10 years. The new contract monitoring officer was a key role in monitoring the delivery of the contract objectives and having this resource to also spend time on the Dibden Golf Centre contract was also a big positive step for that partnership.

A review had been completed recently to increase capacity in the Environmental Health team to ensure the Corporate Plan priorities in this area were met. When asked on the size and cost of the Environmental Health service, the Portfolio Holder confirmed the services delivers a wide range of functions, essential in protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the New Forest. Opportunities for grant funding and income generation were regularly reviewed.

The Council's partner, Freedom Leisure, were investing in achieving the ISO140001 Environmental Standard within the first 18 months of the contract with NFDC. This would result in a reduction in the Carbon emissions as a result of more efficient use of energy at the Leisure Centres. An Air Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance document had been developed, and a Clean Air Strategy is being developed.

Services had had to adopt over the last 18 months and provide services in a different way to customers. The importance of an agile and suitably resourced Environmental Health team had been apparent as this team was required to prioritise resource according to greatest risk, support businesses in operating during unprecedented difficult circumstances and advise and reassure the public concerning health risks.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Dibden Contract was due a refresh, now being 10 years into the contractual arrangements with the operator. This was likely to reflect changes in the market since the contract was entered into and provide some much needed clarity on what is expected of the Council as ultimate Landlord when it came to maintenance requirements at the Golf Centre.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed a new arrangement was required to provide much needed infrastructure improvements to the CCTV function. A new charging structure had also been devised to enable recharges to insurances companies who requested images from our systems. The Council will continue to support and provide images to the Police free of charge.

It was too early to quantify a financial impact that a new Health & Wellbeing Strategy may have, but the Task and Finish group was due to meet for the first time shortly.

**4.10.1 Action to follow up: To prepare a report on the activity of the Environmental Health Team and bring said report through to Overview and Scrutiny on an annual basis.**

**4.10.2 Action to follow up: Report on progress through to Overview and Scrutiny on the development of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.**

#### **4.11 People and Places**

The Portfolio Holder confirmed a recent review had been undertaken on the Senior Management structure across Street Scene and Grounds and that this had resulted in a £45,000 saving being included in the Council's MTFP. Several other reviews were underway, including litter and customer services.

The level of resources in operational delivery were confirmed as appropriate, but there was work to be done to ensure the staff working from the outlying sites continued to stay valued and supported. It was felt that Arts and Culture may require additional resources as the District was now one of the Arts Council's 54 Priority Places. The implications would become clearer over the next 6 months.

The Portfolio Holder believed there were lots of opportunities for partnership working within his Portfolio. The emerging litter strategy would build on good foundations in working with the Town and Parish Councils as would the Council's grass strategy.

The Environmental Enforcement and Amenities team would continue to encourage and enforce responsible disposal of waste and the grass and tree strategy gave good opportunities to improve environmental sustainability. Wildflower corridors were also

being used to good extent in more recent time, proving good natural habitats for plants and animals to thrive.

The Portfolio holder was keen to further explore opportunities for increased income generation, whether that be through indexed-linked fee increases, or through increased business activity in areas such as trade waste, for example.

The expectation of customers for accessibility outside of the standard 9-5 working day was clear, and the Portfolio Holder expressed an interest to explore new technologies to improve customer interaction with the Council.

There was pressure on Open Space Maintenance and the Council had currently agreed not to take on any further open space to allow time to review the current maintenance requirements and feed into the charging mechanism applied through the S106 process.

When asked about the level of funding provided within the budget to support the voluntary sectors, and Arts and Culture organisations, the Portfolio Holder confirmed the active support given to Citizens Advice New Forest through a formalised funding agreement. CANF provide a vital service across the district in providing free and impartial advice, information and support to those who needed it and the Council worked closely with CANF on a number of projects, including the food larders.

Through the annual Community Grants programme, the Council continued to support voluntary and charitable groups who provided a range of services and activities that supported and benefited New Forest residents. This process enabled any eligible organisation to apply, with all applications being considered. An increase in applications was received during the 2021 round and the budget was kept under review.

**4.11.1 Action to follow up: The implications of being one of the Arts Council's 54 'Priority Places' to be reported through Overview and Scrutiny during 2022.**

**4.11.2 Action to follow up: That the review of the current Open Space Maintenance requirements and charging mechanism applied through the S106 process be followed up through the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.**

## **5. CONCLUSIONS / GROUP COMMENTS**

- 5.1 Members of the Group were again impressed with the depth and breadth of knowledge of the Portfolio Holders, noting that a few had only had their Portfolios since April. The group were grateful to them for their support, and for the support given to the Portfolio Holders from Officers in the Council. Their combined engagement in this process had resulted in some sound actions to follow up on and embed within the Financial planning of the Council.
- 5.2 There was a sense within the Group that a certain degree of cross-over was apparent within some of the Portfolios, and the Group were conscious that some Executive Heads were now working with multiple Portfolio Holders. The Group were concerned that this might lead to duplication and inefficiencies.

**Further Information:**

Financial Strategy Task and Finish  
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**Background Papers:**

Financial Strategy Task and Finish  
Group working papers and resource  
plans.

## Appendix 1 – Generic Questions

1. With the context of the Medium term forecast deficit in mind, what Service Reviews are you due to undertake within your Portfolio to make a contribution towards the savings required?
2. You have recently set out your Portfolio Priorities, Targets and KPI's;
  - a. Do you believe you have the appropriate level of resources available to you to deliver them?
  - b. If you believe you need additional resource, how will it be funded?
3. What services within your Portfolio could be delivered in partnership or collaboratively with other Council's or Third Parties? How actively do you pursue these opportunities?
4. In accordance with the overarching priority of becoming a more sustainable Council;
  - a. What opportunities do you believe exist in your Portfolio to help achieve this?
  - b. What are the threats that prevent your progress towards increased sustainability?
5. Do you align the income generated within your Portfolio to the Council Policy of maximisation, and what opportunities exist for additional income generation?
6. What have you learnt over the past 18 months that can help shape service delivery going forward?

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## CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 NOVEMBER 2021

### THE NEW FOREST LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

#### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Panel note the contents of the report.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides a snapshot of the New Forest Economy using headline labour market data.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The New Forest economy is hugely diverse in terms of the geographical landscape of the district, the workforce which shapes the local economy and the businesses located within it.
- 3.2 The New Forest economy is amongst the largest in Hampshire, however its overall growth does not reflect this for a variety of reasons. An ageing workforce, an underrepresentation of high value added sectors and a high proportion of unskilled residents are all limiting factors. These influences on the New Forest Economy are demonstrated through a variety of different data sources.
- 3.3 This report provides a snapshot of the key aspects of the New Forest labour market which in turn influences the prosperity and further growth of the District.
- 3.4 The previous COSP report, submitted on 23 September 2021, detailed the New Forest Claimant Count (unemployment) with particular emphasis on youth unemployment figures and the impact of the pandemic. Future reports will cover other indicators of the health of the local economy including businesses demography (business births, deaths and survival rates). The business demography data for 2020 will be published in November 2021 and will be the subject of a COSP report in the new year.

#### 4. New Forest Economic Snapshot:

- 4.1 **National & South-East region Headlines relating to October 2021** (latest available data):

The latest update from the Economic & Business Intelligence Service, Hampshire County Council: Hampshire Monthly Labour Market Update (October 2021) stated:

*'The UK economy sees growth but labour supply not keeping pace with labour demand.'*

In Hampshire: *'Demand for labour remains strong with a robust uptick on the month in hiring intentions for Hampshire and Isle of Wight. September's online job postings were up 10% on a sluggish August, 34% higher than a year ago and 9% above pre-pandemic levels (Feb 2020).'*

*There were 32,000 Hampshire & Isle of Wight residents on furlough to end of August 2021, with a 4% take-up rate. This is marginally lower than the national and South East region averages (5%). The Hampshire County Council area (County area) uptake is also 4% based on 22,900 furloughs. The furlough scheme has now ended.*

*Around 31,000 self-employed Hampshire & Isle of Wight residents made a claim for the fifth grant of SEISS by mid-September 2021, representing a 31% take-up rate and broadly in line with national and South region averages. County area has 28% take-up rate (19,300)'.*

#### 4.2 **New Forest Labour Market Profile:**

Like many economic indicators, the labour market is affected by factors that tend to occur at around the same time every year; for example, school leavers entering the labour market in July and whether Easter falls in March or April. In order to compare movements other than annual changes in labour market statistics, such as since the previous quarter or since the previous month, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

The tables below report from the latest available data provided by the ONS (Office for National Statistics).

The total population of the New Forest (2020) was 179,600 (Source: ONS Population estimates)

#### 4.3 **Resident & Non Resident Workers in the District**

A key consideration when reviewing the New Forest Labour market are the levels of out commuting by residents to jobs in other districts and in-commuting by the non-resident workforce (see appendix 1). These figures are from the 2011 Census (the latest figures currently available).

The New Forest has a resident worker population of close to 84,000 and a total workplace population of over 76,000.

In simple terms, this pattern of cross commuting is in part due to those living in higher cost housing travelling out of the district to higher value jobs and those in lower income jobs travelling in from less expensive accommodation in Southampton and Bournemouth.

#### 4.4 **Resident & Non-Resident Earnings**

##### **Earnings of Residents (2020):**

The earnings information collected relates to gross pay before tax, national insurance or other deductions, and excludes payments in kind.

The average weekly earnings (median) of New Forest residents are less than in the South East and Great Britain.

<b>Earnings of Residents only</b>	<b>New Forest</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>
	<b>(Pounds)</b>	<b>(Pounds)</b>	<b>(Pounds)</b>
<b>Gross Weekly Pay</b>			
Full-Time Workers	599.9	631.8	587.1

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis

##### **Earnings of those working in the District (2020):** - includes residents & non-residents

When data on earnings also takes into account those working in the District, but who are resident outside of the District, the impact of lower pay for workers who commute into the New Forest, can be seen in the table below.

Earnings of those working in the District	New Forest	South East	Great Britain
	(Pounds)	(Pounds)	(Pounds)
<b>Gross Weekly Pay</b>			
Full-Time Workers	570.8	608.6	586.7

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - workplace analysis

#### 4.5 The Economically Active:

'Economically Active' is a measure of people who are either in employment or unemployed. The number shown on the table below is for those aged 16 and over, whilst the % are for those aged 16-64.

The table below shows that the New Forest had a slightly lower rate of economically active people than the comparator areas, however this figure reflects the higher number of people aged 16-64 who are 'economically inactive' (see below).

	New Forest	New Forest	South East	Great Britain
	(Numbers)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Economically Active residents	77800	76.5	80.8	78.4

Source: ONS annual population survey

#### 4.6 Economic inactivity (Jul 2020-Jun 2021):

This is a measure of people who are neither in employment nor unemployed aged 16-64. The number shown on the table below is for those aged 16 and over, whilst the % are for those aged 16-64.

The main economically inactive groups are students, people looking after family and home, long-term sick and disabled, temporarily sick and disabled, retired people and 'discouraged' workers.

The figures in the table below reflect the District's higher proportion of 'economically inactive' students (43.4%) compared to averages across the South East (30.6%) and GB (28.5%). In addition, the New Forest has a higher proportion of retired people who are under 64 (17.8% in the New Forest compared to the South East at 16.3% and GB at 13.5%).

Other categories used to determine 'economically inactive' residents are similar in rates to the South East & GB whilst for others, the New Forest sample size is too small to be included in the breakdown of data.

	New Forest	New Forest	South East	Great Britain
	(Level)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Economic inactivity	22700	23.5	19.2	21.6

Source: ONS annual population survey

#### 4.7 Employment by occupation: (Jul 2020-Jun 2021)

The table in appendix 2 shows New Forest occupations classified according to the Standard Occupation Classification 2010. The % shown is a proportion of all persons in employment.

The New Forest has an occupational deficit among higher skilled occupations with its comparator areas. Some 38% of New Forest residents were employed in one of the top three occupational categories, compared to 53% in Hampshire and 50% in GB. Around 36% of New Forest residents were in lower skilled occupations compared with 28% Hampshire and 31% in GB.

It is interesting to note the higher number of residents in 'Skilled Trades Occupations' than in the comparator areas, however ONS do not provide further detail of the composition of this group which would enable further analysis.

#### **4.8 Qualifications of residents (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)**

The figures in appendix 3 show the total number of people who are qualified at a particular level and above, so data in this table are not additive. The numbers and % are for those (resident population) aged 16-64.

In order to add value to the economy through higher value jobs and high growth businesses, there is first the need to ensure that the local workforce is adequately skilled to facilitate this. The New Forest suffers from a skills deficit at the higher end, with only 38% of those aged 16-64 having degree level or higher qualifications compared approximately 44% in the comparator areas.

In addition to ensuring that high growth businesses are provided with a suitably skilled workforce, there is also the need to provide support to lower skilled jobs which evidence shows make up a relatively high proportion of occupations in the district

Whilst the number of residents that have no qualifications is too small for reliable estimate, those residents in this group are by definition more likely to be NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and subsequently less likely to find employment.

#### **4.9 Support to grow the New Forest economy**

There are a number of initiatives that the Council are working on in response to the issues within the economy of the district:

This work programme includes:

- Working with partners, including the Solent LEP, Growth Hubs and Innovate UK to ensure New Forest businesses and entrepreneurs have access to targeted support, funding and specialist advice to help them to grow and create higher value, sustainable jobs.
- Developing a range of initiatives to ensure the resident workforce have the skills necessary to help drive the local economy and that young people see career opportunities within the district. This will include a 'Get Inspired' event which will bring together local businesses and young people to showcase the range of career and employment opportunities that already exist within the District.
- Working with partners to ensure young people have access to advice and information to help to reduce their barriers to employment.

The Central and West Hampshire Youth Employment Hub was launched on 1 November 2021 and has been developed by the Economic Development team along with partners in Eastleigh Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council and the DWP (Department of Work & Pensions).

The Youth Hub will support young people across the four districts and is a virtual, face to face and telephone-based support service with resources and opportunities designed to connect, listen to and provide solutions for young people to find employment, enhance their career prospects and secure their futures. Further information is available at [www.newforest.gov.uk/article/1107/Employment-skills-and-training-support](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/1107/Employment-skills-and-training-support)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 It is important that there is an understanding of how our economy, and the work force which drives it, is performing and target initiatives to address identified issues. Future reports will be brought to the Panel tracking the performance of the economy of the District.

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### Background Papers:

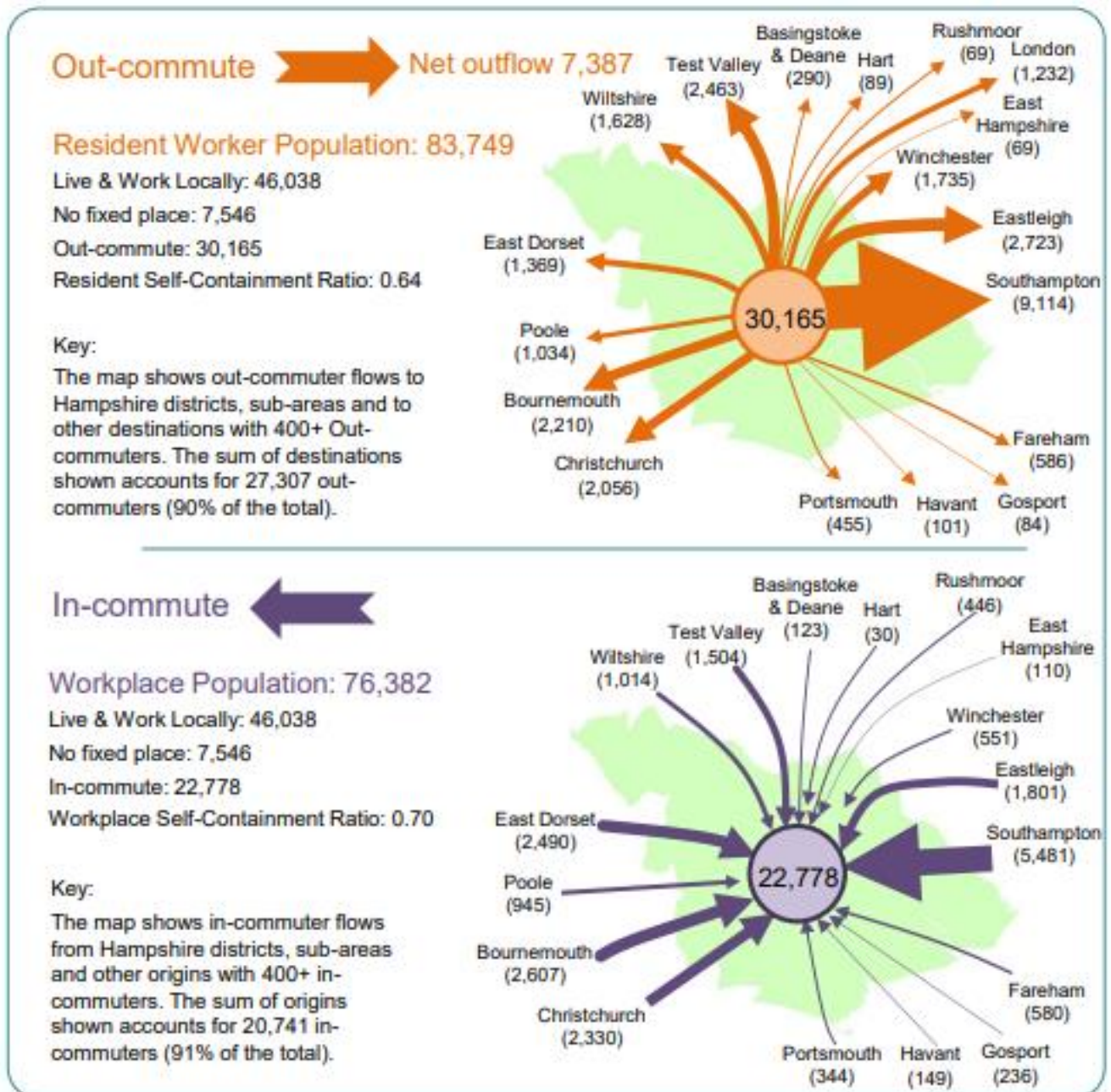
Data Source: Labour Market Profile - New  
Forest, Nomis (Office for National Statistics)

Economic & Business Intelligence Service  
(EBIS), Hampshire County Council:  
Hampshire Monthly Labour Market Update  
October 2021

New Forest Economic Profile 2018, New  
Forest District Council

**Illustrating the commuting patters in to and out of New Forest District for both residents and the District’s workforce.**

Source: New Forest Economic Profile 2018, based on data from ONS 2011 Census (latest available data)



## Appendix 2: Employment by occupation: (Jul 2020-Jun 2021)

This table shows New Forest occupations classified according to the Standard Occupation Classification 2010. The % shown is a proportion of all persons in employment in the District.

	<b>New Forest</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>
	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>
1 Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	10	12.4	10.9
2 Professional Occupations	17.6	23.9	23.3
3 Associate Professional & Technical	10.6	16.6	15.6
4 Administrative & Secretarial	9.7	10.4	10.2
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	16.3	8.9	9
6 Caring, Leisure & Other Service Occupations	9.8	9.2	9
7 Sales & Customer Service Occupations	6.5	6.4	7.1
8 Process Plant & Machine Operatives	6.3	4.3	5.6
9 Elementary Occupations	13.2	7.8	9.1

Source: ONS annual population survey

### Appendix 3: Qualifications of residents (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)

The figures in this table show the total number of people who are qualified at a particular level and above, so data in this table are not additive. The numbers and % are for those (resident population) aged 16-64. Source: ONS annual population survey.

# symbol denotes a sample size too small for reliable estimate.

Qualification Level	Approximate equivalents	New Forest	New Forest	South East	Great Britain
		(Level)	(%)	(%)	(%)
NVQ4 And Above	e.g. HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent.	37,300	37.8	45.1	43.1
NVQ3 And Above	e.g. 2 or more A Levels, advanced GNVQ	61,000	61.9	63.8	61.3
NVQ2 And Above	e.g. 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C, intermediate GNVQ	78,900	80	80.5	78.1
NVQ1 And Above	e.g. fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C, foundation GNVQ	94,200	95.6	90.2	87.7
Other Qualifications	n/a	#	#	5	5.9
No Qualifications	n/a	#	#	4.8	6.4

## CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 NOVEMBER 2021

### SUMMARY OF WELCOME BACK FUND EXPENDITURE

#### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Panel note the content of the report.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report summaries the projects that have taken delivered to date and future planned projects to be funded through the Welcome Back Fund.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Welcome Back Fund is an extension to the Reopening High Street Safely fund which was launched in 2020. The Council has been allocated £224,208 Welcome Back Fund.
- 3.2 The Welcome Back Fund (WBF) is providing councils across England a share of £56 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. This funding builds on the £50 million Reopening High Street Safely Fund (RHSSF) allocated to councils in 2020 and forms part of the wider support government is providing to communities and businesses.
- 3.3 The purpose of the WBF is to provide support to enable safe trading in public places for businesses and customers. There is a particular focus on our high streets or 'District Centres' as well as other public places that are at the heart of towns and cities gearing up to reopen as safe, welcoming spaces. The funding is in place to deliver temporary enhancements until 31 March 2022.
- 3.4 The allocation can be spent across 6 strands of activity and Local Authorities are encouraged to work with Town/Parishes as delivery partners.
1. Support to develop an action plan for how the local authority may begin to safely reopen their local economies.
  2. Communications and public information activity to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
  3. Business-facing awareness raising activities to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
  4. Temporary public realm changes to ensure that reopening of local economies can be managed successfully and safely.
  5. Support to promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy.
  6. Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium term impact of Covid-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street.
- 3.5 Any activities carried out must be procured in accordance with the EDRF rules and have the appropriate branding relating to the fund to be able to submit a successful claim.

#### **4. PROJECTS TO DATE**

4.1 The Council has been working with town and parish councils to identify and implement projects. The activities that have been carried out are as follows:

- Publication of a dedicated web page which includes posters that can be downloaded (or printed on request)  
<https://newforest.gov.uk/article/2711/Planning-support-for-businesses-reopening>
- Appointment of Covid-19 Safety Operative to work on Lymington Market days to ensure safe working on market days along high street (employed by Lymington and Pennington Town Council)
- Signs/Stickers/floor graphics for public information on social distancing (procured by New Milton Town Council)
- Be Alert Safety packs for businesses including sanitiser packs (procured by Ringwood Town Council)
- Installation or queuing / barrier rope around shopping area to assist shops (procured by Burley Parish Council)
- Traffic and diversion signs to widen an area of pavement. No entry symbols to highlight temporary no traffic zone (procured by Brockenhurst Parish Council)

4.2 To date the Council have submitted a claim to MHCLG for £11,435.56 and all direct costs have been occurred by delivery partners (Town and Parish Councils). The original funding criteria were very limiting and hence the low reclaim rate. To increase the number of projects officers have now identified a series of initiatives.

#### **5. PROJECTS CURRENTLY BEING PROCURED AND IMPLEMENTED**

5.1 Currently officers are at advanced stages to procure resources to deliver a number of additional projects to utilise the funding:

##### Media Campaign

5.2 A consultant is being appointed to develop, promote, and deliver a campaign plan to highlight and support local businesses and encourage visitors to the local economy with activities to include:

- Support the businesses and sectors hit hardest by the pandemic, from retail and hospitality, to attractions and events.
- Work with local businesses to understand change in footfall, encourage safe behaviours and develop safety messages for returning customers.
- Deliver clear messages on safe reopening via both social and print media to increase day visitor and resident awareness.
- Maximise and market the districts USP's to residents and visitors to the area
- Provide incentives to both residents and businesses, such as shopping offers to raise the profile of the local area and promotion of the safe reopening.
- Enhance communication and marketing locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Work with NFDC and Town and Parish Council to ensure common action and common benefits across the whole district are achieved.

##### Video Campaign

5.3 A consultant is being appointed to produce 13 videos (one for each of our main town/villages). The video will promote businesses and local services within each area, highlighting key safety messages specific to each area, but not specific businesses.

- 5.4 Each video map will be made available to publish on our website and also have the ability to be used by and linked to Town & Parish Council and/or local Business Association/Chamber of Trade websites.
- 5.5 In addition, a 'New Forest' wide video will be produced to include a seasonal safety video for use on social media and web distribution.

#### Information Panels

- 5.6 At least 10 information panels are being installed in the major car parks and high streets across the district. The panels/artwork will remain in place until the end of the claim period.

#### Solar Compacting Bins

- 5.7 Solar compacting bins have been purchased through this fund and will be installed initially in Lymington. These bins will be installed around Lymington Quay and High Street. Further bins will be purchased and located around the District.

#### Water Fillers

- 5.8 The fund is being used to install an initial 4 water bottle refilling stations at town centre toilet blocks. These fillers will reduce plastic and ensure the bottles are filled with uncontaminated water so a sustainable and safe investment.
- 5.9 Further projects will be identified in the remaining months on the contract period.

### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 All claims are submitted to MHCLG retrospectively and audited by them. It is therefore important that all procurement and branding rules are followed to ensure that the monies can be recovered.

### **7. CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none.

### **8. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are none, no personal data is being collected as part of this work.

**For further information please contact:**

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**Background Papers:**

General guidance:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1021246/Welcome\\_Back\\_Fund\\_Guidance\\_v3\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021246/Welcome_Back_Fund_Guidance_v3_Final.pdf)

FAQ (including procurement):  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1021247/Welcome\\_Back\\_Fund\\_FAQs\\_v3\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021247/Welcome_Back_Fund_FAQs_v3_Final.pdf)

Branding and publicity:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/836956/ESIF-GN-1-005\\_ESIF\\_Branding\\_and\\_Publicity\\_Requirements\\_v8\\_updated.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836956/ESIF-GN-1-005_ESIF_Branding_and_Publicity_Requirements_v8_updated.pdf)

## CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

### WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022

ITEM	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	LEAD OFFICER
<b>20 JANUARY 2022</b>			
Asset Maintenance and Replacement Programme and General Fund Capital Programme	To receive the proposed Programmes	Report	Alan Bethune
Capital Strategy	To receive the proposed capital strategy	Report	Alan Bethune
ICT strategy delivery update	To receive and update on progress against the delivery of the ICT strategy.	Report	Alan Bethune
<b>24 MARCH 2022</b>			
Staff Efficiency/Innovation Ideas Survey	To receive an update on staff ideas put forward, 12 months after of the inception of the scheme.	Report	Alan Bethune
<b>DATES TO BE ALLOCATED</b>			
Procurement Update	To receive regular updates summarising procurement activities	Report	Gary Jarvis
Economic Development Performance Indicators		TBC	Claire Upton-Brown

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Agenda Item 11

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