

27 FEBRUARY 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 27 February 2023

- * Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (Chairman)
- * Cllr Neville Penman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Diane Andrews
- Ann Bellows
- Sue Bennison
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- Hilary Brand
- Alex Brunsdon
- * Fran Carpenter
- * Louise Cerasoli
- Mark Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- Anne Corbridge
- * Keith Craze
- * Kate Crisell
- * Sean Cullen
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- Arthur Davis
- * Sandra Delemare
- * Philip Dowd
- * Jan Duke
- * Barry Dunning
- Jacqui England
- * Richard Frampton
- * Allan Glass
- * Andrew Gossage
- * Michael Harris
- David Harrison

Councillors:

- * David Hawkins
- * Edward Heron
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Alison Hoare
- Maureen Holding
- * Christine Hopkins
- * Mahmoud Kangarani
- * Joshua Kidd
- * Emma Lane
- * Martyn Levitt
- * Alexis McEvoy
- Ian Murray
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Caroline Rackham
- Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Barry Rickman
- * Tony Ring
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * David Russell
- * Ann Sevier
- * Michael Thierry
- Beverley Thorne
- * Derek Tipp
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * John Ward

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Grainne O'Rourke and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bellows, Bennison, Brand, Brunsdon, M Clark, Corbridge, Davis, England, Harrison, Holding, Reid and Thorne.

55 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2022, be confirmed.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

All Members of the Council had been granted the necessary dispensations to speak and to vote on matters concerning the annual members' allowances scheme, budget and Council Tax, considered at minutes 64 and 65 below.

Cllr A Wade had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote on the Annual Budget and Council Tax, as an employee of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, considered at minutes 64 and 65 below.

There were no other declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Members.

57 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Former Cllr Alan Rice

The Chairman referred with great sadness to the recent passing of former Councillor Alan Rice, who was a serving New Milton Town Councillor. Alan was first elected to New Forest District Council in 1973 to the Bashley ward and served continuously until 2015. He served as a Member of the preceding Lymington Borough Council from 1963. He also gave over 40 years of service to Hampshire County Council.

Alan held the position of Chairman of the District Council in 2000/01 and held a number of prominent committee positions including the Planning Committee, of which he was Chairman in the 1970s. He also represented the District Council on a number of Outside Bodies, particularly the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust and the Solent Forum for over 15 years.

Members of the Council gave their own personal tributes to Alan.

The Chairman expressed his sincere condolences to Alan's family and friends and placed on record the Council's thanks for the outstanding service he had given the District.

Former Cllr Graham Parkes

The Chairman referred to the very sad news of the recent passing of former Councillor Graham Parkes. Graham was first elected to the Furzedown and Hardley ward in May 2003, serving four years on NFDC until May 2007.

Graham served as a Member of the Planning Committee, Appeals Committee and the Economy and Planning Review Panel, in addition to his service to Hythe and Dibden Parish Council.

Members of the Council gave their own personal tributes to Graham.

The Chairman expressed his sincere condolences to Graham's family and friends and placed on record the Council's thanks for the service he had given the District.

Ukraine Conflict – 1 Year On

The Chairman referred to the one minute silence held on Friday 24 February 2023, to mark one year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian flag was flying at Appletree Court as the Council continued to stand with the people of Ukraine.

Holocaust Memorial Day

On 27 January 2023, the Chairman lit a candle to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, as the Council recognised those who endured genocide, honouring the survivors and all those whose lives were changed beyond recognition.

Engagements

The Chairman referred to the following recent engagements:-

5 February

Attended the Mayor of New Milton's Annual Civic Service, in support of charities SCARF New Forest and Parkinsons Dance at Forest Arts.

10 February

Attended a charity event hosted by the Mayor of Southampton at the Guildhall, with the money raised going towards City Reach, Southampton Street Pastors and Southampton Hospital Charity.

16 February

Attended the Institution and Induction service of Reverend Alison Bennett at All Saints Church, Fawley.

Procedures

The Chairman confirmed his intention to ask the Council to agree to suspend Standing Orders to allow the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to exceed the time limit of five minutes on their speeches under the Annual Budget item, later on the agenda.

He reminded Members that a number of recorded votes would need to be taken at the meeting in accordance with the law.

Referring to the substantial and complex business on the agenda, the Chairman requested the Council's support and cooperation to help with the smooth running of the meeting.

58 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

59 REPORT OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Cllr Alvey presented the report of the Audit Committee meeting held on 27 January 2023, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Lane seconded the motion.

Paragraph 1 – Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 (Minute No 38)

Note – Cllr Rackham requested that her abstention from the recommendation on this item, be recorded.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

60 REPORT OF GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Cllr Clarke presented the report of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee meeting held on 10 February 2023, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Tungate seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

61 REPORT OF HR COMMITTEE

The Leader presented the report of the HR Committee meeting held on 12 January 2023, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

62 REPORT OF COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIPS AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Cllr Craze presented the report of the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 17 January 2023, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Penman seconded the motion.

The report sought the adoption of a number of measures having considered the following motion referred to it by the Council:-

“This Council:-

- *Is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding pets being given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in England - and notes the issue predominantly concerns goldfish.*
- *Is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes.*
- *Recognises that many cases of pets being given as prizes may go unreported each year.*
- *Supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on New Forest District Council land.*

The Council agrees to:

- *Ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on New Forest District Council land.*
- *Write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.”*

The Panel's recommended course of action was as follows:-

- That the Council's Estates and Open Spaces Service be asked to include conditions precluding the giving of pets as prizes in agreements prior to giving consent to use of its land.
- That a letter be sent to all Parish and Town Councils in the New Forest district, urging them to adopt the same approach in imposing conditions on use of their land precluding the giving of pets as prizes.
- That a letter be sent on behalf of the Council to the Government urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land.

One Member welcomed the motion and actions proposed by the Panel. He encouraged Members to consider dealing with motions of this nature at the initial meeting they are proposed, where there is wide support for the content of such motions.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

63 REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Cllr Rippon-Swaine presented the report of the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 12 January 2023, and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Tipp seconded the motion.

The report followed the consideration of the following motion referred to it by the Council:-

“The cost-of-living crisis affects all areas of our nation. However, many members of the farming community, so important in the production of 54% of the nation's food supply, are struggling to survive in the current financial environment and this includes many of New Forest's farmers. A thriving agricultural sector is crucial to New Forest's economy, landscape, and environment.

This Council notes the cost of animal feed is up by 60% and fertilizer cost by 200%. In the last year, these and other increased costs are against a backdrop of a changing subsidy regime from the government with some farms at risk of losing up to 20% of their income this way. This is leading to many farmers to decide to give up their farms or raise food prices to survive further impacting the cost of living of ordinary New Forest residents.

This Council sees that some farmers are being forced to sell their back up land, which has Forest Rights, and the loss of this land has serious impact on the

sustainability of the ancient New Forest tradition of commoning if alternative support for local farmers is not made available.

This Council recognises that government funding schemes to help farmers exist but due to the current financial environment different approaches need to be considered to improve on the ongoing support.

Therefore, this Council will write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing its concerns about financial state of the farming community and request greater financial support for Farmers to be able to continue to produce food for the UK market at sustainable prices.”

The Council noted the Panel’s support for the motion and the recommendation that the motion should be adopted as proposed.

One Member welcomed the recommendation that the motion be adopted. He encouraged Members to consider dealing with motions of this nature at the initial meeting they are proposed, where there is wide support for the content of such motions.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

64 REPORTS OF THE CABINET

All Members of the Council had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote on matters concerning the Members’ Allowances Scheme, Annual Budget and Council Tax.

Cllr A Wade had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote on the Annual Budget 2023/24, as an employee of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 February 2023 and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

Paragraph 6 – Community Grants (Minute No 70)

Cllr A Wade highlighted that Hythe and Dibden Parish Council was a recipient of a grant, noting that some Members were also Parish Councillors. This matter had been determined by the Cabinet for inclusion in the overall budget proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

The Leader of the Council then presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 February 2023 and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

Paragraph 3 – Housing Services Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy (Minute No 80)

One Member encouraged the Council to consider reflecting on proposed rent and service charges, in light of cost of living challenges. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness recognised the difficult balance the Council had to achieve in ensuring that the ring-fenced housing revenue account budgets were appropriately funded to meet the priorities and requirements for maintenance and improvements in particular, whilst charging in an affordable way for tenants. The support of the Tenant Involvement Group for the levels of rent and service charges was noted.

Paragraph 4 – Housing Revenue Account Budget and the Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure Programme for 2023/24 (Minute No 81)

The recommendations were put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Blunden, Carpenter, Cerasoli, Clarke, Cleary, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, E Heron, J Heron, Hoare, Hopkins, Kidd, Lane, Levitt, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, C Ward and J Ward.

Voting against:- Cllrs Cullen, J Davies, Delemare, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade and M Wade.

Abstaining:- Cllrs Dowd, Duke and Kangarani.

The motion was carried, 37 in favour, 7 against, 3 abstaining.

Paragraph 5 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Annual Budget 2023/24 (Minute No 82)

The Chairman moved that Standing Order 47.6 be suspended to allow the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to exceed the time limit for making their budget speeches. The motion was seconded by the Vice-Chairman and carried.

The Leader of the Council made a statement on the budget as proposed in the report of the Cabinet dated 15 February 2023, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group made a statement and moved an amendment in the form of an alternative budget. Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment. A copy of the alternative budget and statement is attached to these minutes.

The Council debated the Cabinet's budget proposals together with the alternative budget.

The alternative budget was put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Cullen, J Davies, Delemare, Dowd, Kangarani, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade and M Wade.

Voting against:- Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Blunden, Carpenter, Clarke, Cleary, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Duke, Dunning, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, E Heron, J Heron, Hoare, Hopkins, Kidd, Lane, Levitt, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, C Ward and J Ward.

Abstaining:- Cllr Frampton.

The amendment and alternative budget was lost, 9 in favour, 36 against, 1 abstaining.

The substantive motion of the budget as outlined in the report of the Cabinet dated 15 February 2023 was put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Blunden, Carpenter, Clarke, Cleary, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Duke, Dunning, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, E Heron, J Heron, Hoare, Hopkins, Kidd, Lane, Levitt, McEvoy, O'Sullivan, Penman, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, C Ward and J Ward.

Voting against:- Cllrs Cullen, J Davies, Delemare, Dowd, Kangarani, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade and M Wade.

Abstaining:- Cllr Frampton.

The substantive motion was carried, 36 in favour, 9 against, 1 abstaining.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the recommendations be adopted.

65 THE 2023/24 COUNCIL TAX

All Members of the Council had been granted dispensations to speak and vote on this item. Cllr A Wade had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote on this item, as an employee of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

The Council considered the Council Tax for 2023/24.

The Leader moved the recommendations in the report. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

The recommendations were put to a recorded vote, the outcome of which was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Andrews, Blunden, Carpenter, Clarke, Cleary, Craze, Crisell, S Davies, Delemare, Dowd, Duke, Dunning, Glass, Gossage, Harris, Hawkins, E Heron, J Heron, Hoare, Hopkins, Kidd, Lane, Levitt, McEvoy,

O'Sullivan, Penman, Reilly, Rickman, Ring, Rippon-Swaine, Russell, Sevier, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, C Ward and J Ward.

Voting against:- None.

Abstaining:- Cllrs Cullen, Frampton, Kangarani, Osborne, Rackham, A Wade and M Wade.

The recommendations were carried – 38 in favour, 0 against, 7 abstaining.

66 QUESTIONS

There were none.

67 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22A as follows:-

- Cllr Dunning to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr S Davies, on wheelie bins.
- Cllr Crisell to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr Russell, on tree planting.
- Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing, Cllr Blunden, on CCTV.
- Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr Russell, on Eling Tide Mill.
- Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services, Cllr E Heron, on housing targets.
- Cllr C Ward to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, Cllr Andrews, on planning policy reforms.
- Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr Russell, on fly-tipping.
- Cllr Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on Freeport environmental protections.

Note:-

A copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

68 INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Leader moved the recommendations as set out on the agenda, to enable the Council to make preparations ready for new Independent Persons to be appointed by the Council in May 2023. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Monitoring Officer be delegated authority to commence a recruitment process for two new Independent Persons, with recommendations to be made to the Council by a Panel comprising the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Service Manager for Democratic and Support Services.

69 DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS

The Leader of the Council moved the recommendations as set out on the agenda, following recent changes to the Council's staffing structures. Cllr Andrews seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers that are the responsibility of the Council, be updated to:-

- (a) replace all references to "Executive Head" with "Strategic Director"; and
- (b) include a new delegation to "Assistant Director", in respect of all powers currently delegated to Strategic Directors, Service Managers and all other Council officers.

70 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN

BUDGET SPEECH – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

I find it a real privilege to present the council's budget for 2023/24 as the Leader of the Council.

It is a budget that will look after the best interests of the New Forest residents and Council Tax payers, not only in the next financial year, but also over many years to come.

It is because of the pro-active and prudent way in which the conservative administration has dealt with financial constraints over the years that we are still able to invest in new and enhanced services today.

Through our Resident survey we have listened to what our residents have told us their priorities are and I am pleased to be able to see our budget bring forward spending to support a cleaner, greener and safer New Forest.

In this budget, we are able to commit to three hundred thousand pounds (£300,000) in 2023/24 of investment in enhanced Community Safety measures, further enhancing the feeling of safety within our various communities.

We are able to invest one million pounds (£1 million) over the next 4 years in Climate action measures, to improve on the Council's carbon position, and improve the quality of the local environment we all enjoy so much.

The budget invests seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds (£750,000) over the next 3 years in Council wide transformation. This programme will deliver improved and more efficient services to the residents and customers of the New Forest and will make a valuable contribution in addressing the Council's forecast deficit over the Medium Term.

We have set aside seven million pounds (£7 million) to invest in a new depot facility to safeguard the waste management services for the foreseeable future. This investment will play a huge part in supporting significant improvements to recycling rates and the achievement of the Council's climate action plan.

Over the next 3 years we are able to invest over 11 million pounds (£11 million) on upgraded vehicles and plant, replacing older and less economical models with a new greener and more efficient fleet.

I am also immensely proud of our track record as a housing landlord, with five thousand one hundred and eighty five (5,185) Council owned homes providing affordable housing for those who most need it. The ring-fenced housing revenue account supports the management and maintenance of these properties as well as our ambitious programme to build more affordable homes.

For the housing revenue account, the budget includes proposed investment of over forty five million pounds (£45 million) over the next 3 years in additional council owned housing.

This budget also includes an ability to spend forty seven million pounds (£47 million) in planned, reactive and cyclical maintenance also over the next 3 years, protecting the Council's assets, but more importantly, protecting the well loved homes of our six thousand four hundred and sixty three (6,463) named tenants.

The General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets presented to you this evening do not shy away from tough decisions that need to be taken on tax, rent and charges.

Our proposed band D Council Tax for the year is often lost in the overall scale of the Council Tax bill. A bill that also includes the precepts from the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Authority and, where applicable the Town and Parish Council.

This Council's proposed Council Tax charge per typical band D property is one hundred and ninety three pounds and ninety nine pence (£193.99) for the year; this is just three pounds and seventy two pence (£3.72) per week. It would take me too long to mention all of the invaluable services that this council provides for that modest weekly sum.

The proposed housing rent increase of 7% provides the necessary increase in income required to fund the increased statutory resident engagement matters, and significant maintenance and capital programmes, including over one point two million pounds (£1.2 million) of greener housing initiatives for next year alone.

The fees that we charge for our services have to recognise that the Council's costs have increased. We need growth in fees and charges to help pay for the services we provide and to enable us to do more as we look forward into the future.

Councillors, that is what a conservative administration budget does,

it looks forward to the future

It is based on sound information,

and doesn't look to introduce vote winning gimmicks or ill thought through plans.

I fully endorse the recommendations as outlined in the reports of the Cabinet.

I give you a budget that is fit for now, and a budget that is fit for a vibrant future New Forest.

Thank you.

BUDGET SPEECH – LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Conservative budget is the same as they have produced before, year on year unimaginative, uncaring and out of touch with the community this council should be serving. In a cost of living crisis with high interest rates, high food, energy and basic living expenses have they looked how to support New Forest people, have they come up with something different to help with the current financial climate ? No because they do not understand or recognise what is going on around them. Just the same old thing delivering nothing new. If you do the same old thing, you get the same old result, financial mediocrity.

The Liberal Democrats do not believe in producing more mediocrity and have been out listening to New Forest residents and businesses to produce an alternative fully costed budget. The Liberal Democrats' budget is based upon what we have heard talking to New Forest residents to see what they want and they need in these challenging times. And we can all agree we live in challenging times. Listening to people it is clear we need a Fairer New Forest, where our residents feel safe in their communities, where business can thrive. Where people can work, earn a stable living and visitors can come and enjoy the Forest environment and contribute to the local economy. Our budget is about change, doing things differently to get a better result for local people.

The cost of living affects us all regardless of age or employment status, it is more expensive to live for everyone. It is equally challenging for local business with rising energy and material costs, too many local shops have disappeared. Liberal Democrats have spoken to both local traders and their customers in our community on how we can stop this.

We have listened to businesses in regards to what support they need to help start a business in our district. They want to see an enhanced introduction pack to start running a business in the New Forest explaining what is required legally, the technical requirements, which new business owners do not know. In addition to support our current businesses we would reshape our Business and Tourism activity to make it have a more focused business development support and advice role.

In addition we propose to freeze the price of all parking clocks for our car parks. Then provide one free two hour parking clock per New Forest Council tax paying residence, where there is car ownership for our town and village centre car parks. This one year trial will help our residents by reducing the cost of parking in their pocket and support our retail outlets by encouraging people to shop and stay local. It will be funded by raising the price at the ticket machine in line with parking charges in most surrounding areas and removal of the annual grant from the General fund into the Capital fund. The impact of this measure to be reviewed and provide a basis to decide what further support we can give local shoppers and businesses in the future.

There are on average 13 million visitor days to the New Forest each year, it is massive contribution to the district's local economy. We have listened to those businesses servicing the tourist sector and would employ a marketer to specialise in bringing events, which would attract more tourists to spend in our area.

We also propose the construction of a New Forest tourist App, which would be self- funding and easy for tourists to purchase and use showing the many fine places to visit in our unique District.

The benefits of the Freeport for business is clear and transparent but local people understandably want to know what is in it for them? What are the benefits for green,

sustainable living New Forest people will get from the Freeport development for example. New Forest Liberal Democrats want a regeneration strategy to show exactly what benefits local residents will receive to make up for the increased traffic and development of the Waterside area.

We want New Forest District council to be a serious driver in getting a clear transport infrastructure strategy in partnership with Hampshire County Council, one that shows the detail of how we will manage this potentially massive development. To compliment this the Liberal Democrats want more local input to the Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

We propose a detailed community regeneration strategy using funding from the Freeport to conduct a feasibility study to develop those empty buildings in New Forest towns and villages for potential commercial or home use.

To further reduce the impact of the cost of living on our council tax payers Liberal Democrats want an enhanced programme of commercial developments to bring in revenue to subsidise council tax so that we would part fund improvements to our area from these revenue streams.

New Forest residents want to feel secure in their homes, and safe on their streets. Yet in 2022 there were 13,945 crime in the new Forest District area, a 9% rise on the 2020 figures. Liberal Democrats want this authority to take its community safety responsibilities more seriously and would fund a Crime Prevention officer, who would be imbedded in the Safer New Forest team working on strategies for both communities and advice for people and business to make their property more secure.

In support of the Police we want to instigate a feasibility study into funding in partnership with Town and Parish councils an Accredited Community Safety Service across the district, a service which already works well in some communities, which still have them in dealing with issues the Police do not have time or resources to address. We want to bring back a visible presence in our towns and villages to serve all our communities. Spending money on CCTV is fine but it only records the crime, we want to prevent it from taking place.

To compensate for the reduction by the Conservative party of police officers, a Liberal Democrats administration would campaign hard to get more Police in the New Forest district as keeping people safe is a major priority for our party.

Partnering Well Being is one of this council's portfolios yet the Conservative administration have given the management of the recreation centres to a third party, who we are still having to subsidise. New Forest residents tell us the service is poorer than when the authority used to run the centres, even the swimming pools are cold now. Our children and grandchildren are learning to swim in much colder swimming pools. Well Liberal Democrats take the wellbeing of our residents very seriously and we would look at the important issues being raised. We care particularly about the young of our district so we would part fund to the tune of £100k and work with other agencies to set up youth hubs to help and support the young people of our district.

Child poverty is a disgrace in the UK in the 21st century with our economy and even more so in a relatively well off area such as the New Forest. We have an above the average for Hampshire number of children on free school meals, which has risen since I raised it last year to 17.9% of all school children in our district compared to 17.1% for the county as a whole. That members is 3,385 New Forest school children up from the 3,339 it was last year. We Liberal Democrats care about this and we will put £500,000 initially over two years into a

project working with all appropriate agencies and charities to reduce child poverty in our district, this would be funded from unused reserves and any future underspend.

An important part of wellbeing is a leak proof roof over your head, we have currently around 1500 New Forest families on the Housing waiting list, so only building 600 homes is not good enough for them. There was a £4 million underspend on the social house building programme this year. Add to that £1 million unbudgeted extra spend on top of the existing £750k on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families.

Liberal Democrats recognise the work by the Housing department to deliver Social Housing, but there have been families on the waiting list for between 5 and 10 years! Liberal Democrats would look to build more houses, do things differently by using more innovative ways to fund a full house building programme. In addition we will ensure the new Local Plan to contains a detailed strategy for reducing the number of empty town and village centre properties by re-designating for residential. We will work to make a real positive change to the social housing situation in our district.

It was sad to see the Waterside Theatre in Holbury demolished. The NFDC role is in oversight to ensure that Arts Council funding is allocated in a strategic and impactful way. There is little sign of this happening enough from this administration. Culture and creativity are crucial elements in wellbeing so we will promote and support public and community art projects. Liberal Democrats propose allocating 50K fund as a pilot project for grants to apply for hiring creative spaces throughout the district for artistic and cultural use.

Protecting our unique environment is a key Liberal Democrat priority both in respect of the day to day living environment and protecting our future from the ravages of climate change.

In order to further encourage the use of electric cars and to subsidise our car parks we propose a feasibility study into covering areas of our car parks to allow the roofs to house solar panels. This will not only generate electricity for the charging points but to sell the excess power to the grid to pay for the maintenance of the car park.

A Liberal Democrat administration will continue to focus on the reduction of carbon usage across the authority's operations to meet the target for carbon neutrality as we want to protect our environment for futures generations of New Forest people.

New Forest District Council is responsible for the coast line of all the district along with the Environment Agency, so far it has mostly ignored the coastline east of Lymington and along the Waterside concentrating on the cost west of Lymington, where it has spent much, time effort and money. We will reshape the focus onto the highly populated sections so far ignored to further support the protection of the coastline and the areas to be developed for the Freeport.

Liberal Democrats propose a more focused Cleaner Streets strategy to improve the urban environments of our towns and villages to make them more attractive places to visit. In doing so we will have a strategy for wild planting to promote Bio-diversity and enhance the many small plots of land, which will further enrich the attractiveness of our communities and promote wildlife.

We have an ageing population which will only increase up to 2039 according to the Office for National Statistics so establishing public transport links through community transport projects is a necessity for our spread-out communities. Liberal Democrats want the council to work with our Town and Parish councils to instigate and promote community transport projects. It is appalling that the district's main hospitals at Lymington and Southampton General are not served by a direct bus service from the Waterside or the west of our district.

Our budget is a budget for change, a budget for a Fairer New Forest seeking to give something back to our residents and business. We have listened to what New Forest people have said and acted on it. It is designed to impact on the Cost of Living Crisis by stimulating business, making it cheaper to shop locally by giving a free two hour clock to council tax paying households with a car.

It lays out how we wish to improve the environment of our communities and continue looking at ways to positively impact climate change. Liberal Democrats will fight to protect our district's environment from defending the green space of Dibden Bay to reducing our carbon emissions.

We will fight for public transport and where we cannot get a satisfactory result we will investigate community transport options

Liberal Democrat recognise how important feeling safe and secure means to our residents for their quality of life and this budget makes Safer New Forest really safer by providing community safety actions, which currently do not exist.

The budget provides real actions to promote and help with wellbeing for the young and old alike understanding the complexities of daily life and how working with other agencies the district council can make a real positive difference.

This council from the previous budget and last year's underspends put around £3 million into reserves, which now total £58 million of which only £25 million is ear marked so before we charged with spending money we have not got that is clearly not the case. Combined with the underspends this council seems to generate under this administration we will probably not need to use much of the reserves anyway. However rather than speculating we have shown how can do it with the funds we currently have under our control, which as the **paper says will not affect the medium term financial plan.**

In these troubled and challenging times we need to do something to help New Forest residents and businesses, we need to do something different. That is why the Liberal Democrats want to give something back to all the people of the New Forest district

This is a budget for the all of our residents, for a Fairer New Forest.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

1. PORTFOLIO LEVEL UPDATES

1.1 Using the same figures prepared by Officers for the administration as the starting point, with the following areas of focus and financial amendments as follows;

1. Planning & Regeneration

Proposal	Resource Implication
Review Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans	Existing Staff
Regeneration Strategy aligning to the benefits from the freeport development	Existing Staff
Clear transport infrastructure strategy in partnership with HCC	Existing Staff
Community regeneration strategy	Existing Staff

2. Partnership & Wellbeing

Proposal	Resource Implication
Youth Hubs Seed Corn Capital Funding	£100,000 (Capital)
Crime Prevention Officer	£50,000 (Revenue)
Feasibility study of funding in partnership with Town and Parish Council an ACSO service	Existing Staff

3. Business, Tourism & High Street

Proposal	Resource Implication
Introduction pack to running a business in the New Forest	Existing Staff
Business development role	Existing Staff
Tourism - employ a marketeer to deliver events	Existing Staff
Tourist App (self-funding)	Existing Staff

4. Environment & Coastal

Proposal	Resource Implication
Focus on the coastline east of Lymington	Existing Staff

Free 2 hours parking in town centre car parks for New Forest Residents – 1 yr pilot, subject to review.	£1.2million (Revenue)
Feasibility study into turning NFDC car parks into covered solar panelled to generate electricity for charging electric vehicles and sell excess power to subsidise car parking costs	£50,000 (Revenue)

5. Housing & Homelessness

Proposal	Resource Implication
Detailed strategy for reducing the number of empty homes in the district by redesignating for residential in the local plan	Existing Staff

6. Finance, Investment & Corporate Services

Proposal	Resource Implication
A feasibility study and costed strategy into developing current empty buildings in New Forest towns for commercial use	Existing Staff
An enhanced programme to bring in additional revenue to subsidise council tax from commercial developments	Existing Staff
Working with other agencies and providing a grant contribution of £500,000 over 2 years aimed reducing child poverty in the New Forest District	£500,000 (Revenue)

7. People & Places

Proposal	Resource Implication
Cleaner streets strategy	Existing Staff
Community bus strategy working with HCC and Town and Parish councils	Existing Staff
Wild Planting including in-between cemetery plots Bio diversity	Existing Budget
Creative spaces – 1 yr pilot, subject to review	£50,000 (Revenue)

2. A SUMMARY OF THE ALTERNATIVE BUDGET AND FUNDING PROPOSALS

2.1 Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrate the aggregate total of the proposed budget adjustments as above, and includes a summary on how these adjustments are to be funded:

Table 1 – Total Adjustments REVENUE

	One-off £	Ongoing £
PROPOSAL:		
- Crime Prevention Officer		+50,000
- 2 hrs free resident parking	+ 1,200,000	
- Solar Feasibility Study	+ 50,000	
- Reducing Child Poverty	+ 500,000 (total over 2 years)	
- Creative Spaces	+ 50,000	
TOTAL:	+ 1,800,000	+50,000
FUNDING:		
- Equalisation Reserve	- 600,000 (total over 2 years)	
- Removal of GF contribution to Capital Programme	- 700,000	
- Increase in Metered Parking Charges	- 500,000	- 500,000
TOTAL:	- 1,800,000	- 500,000

2.2 The revenue proposals require a total £600,000 contribution from the Council's Budget Equalisation Reserve over 2 years, which would still retain a sufficient balance to support the MTFP. We would supplement this reserve with yearend budgetary underspends, if they occur.

2.3 The Liberal Democrat budget would require the Council's Capital Programme to be self-financing, and not supported by a revenue budget contribution.

2.4 The 2 hour free resident household parking pilot would be used as leverage to increase metered charging, meaning that if the pilot didn't continue indefinitely, the Council would have an additional annual income of £500,000.

Table 2 – Total Adjustments CAPITAL

	One-off £	Ongoing £
Summary of Proposals	+ 100,000	NA
Funding:		
Use of Equalisation Reserve	- 100,000	

2.5 The capital proposals require a £100,000 one-off contribution from the Council's Budget Equalisation Reserve, which would still retain a sufficient balance to support the MTFP.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022-2026

ALTERNATIVE GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023/24

	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's
	Administration Budget	Lib. Dem. Budget Changes	Lib. Dem. Budget
PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS			
Business , Tourism and High Streets	393		393
Environment and Coastal Services	4,241	+50+1200-550	4,941
Finance, Investment and Corporate Services	3,653	+250	3,903
Housing and Homelessness Services	3,136		3,136
Leader	923		923
Partnering and Wellbeing	3,464	+50	3,514
People and Places	4,083	+50	4,133
Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure	2,958		2,958
	22,851	1,050	23,901
Reversal of Depreciation	-1,823		-1,823
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Revenue Reserves	-283	-350	-633
NET PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS	20,745	700	21,445
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,876		1,876
Contribution to Capital Programme Financing (RCCO)	700	-700	0
Interest Earnings (Net)	-837		-837
New Homes Bonus	-16		-16
GENERAL FUND NET BUDGET REQUIREMENTS	22,468	0	22,468
COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION			
Budget Requirement	22,468	0	22,468
Less:			
Settlement Funding Assessment			
Lower Tier Services Grant	0		0
Services Grant	-155		-155
Guarantee Grant (MHCLG)	-699		-699
Business Rates Baseline	-4,147		-4,147
	-5,001	0	-5,001
Locally Retained Business Rates	-3,575		-3,575
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Business Rates	390		390
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Council Tax	-262		-262
COUNCIL TAX	14,020	0	14,020
TAX BASE NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	72,271.70		72,271.70
COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY	193.99		193.99
GENERAL FUND BALANCE 31 MARCH	3,000		3,000

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022-2026

ALTERNATIVE CAPITAL PROJECTS REQUIREMENTS WITH FINANCING

	Portfolio	PROJECT REQUIREMENTS £			ORIGINAL 2023/24 PROJECT FINANCING £			
		2022/23 £ Budget Revised (Nov. Cabinet)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	NFDC Resources / Loan	Better Care Fund	Grant / Income
Sustainability Fund - Unallocated	LEADER / ALL	300,000	250,000	250,000	250,000			
Sustainability Fund - Crow Lane Solar Panels	LEADER / ALL	200,000						
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	LEADER / ALL		42,000	181,000			42,000	
Rural England Prosperity Fund	B,T&HS		240,000	300,000			240,000	
Disabled Facilities Grants	HOU (GF)	900,000	1,300,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,300,000		
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (22-27)	ENV & COAST	1,775,000	2,631,000	1,811,000	2,216,000		2,631,000	
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (18-21)	ENV & COAST	363,000						
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (12-17)	ENV & COAST	12,000						
Barton Horizontal Directional Drilling Trials	ENV & COAST	50,000	10,000	230,000	15,000		10,000	
Milford Promenade Handrail	ENV & COAST	115,000						
Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study	ENV & COAST	15,000	100,000	35,000			100,000	
Milford Beach and Cliff Study	ENV & COAST		10,000	280,000			10,000	
Waste Strategy Container Roll Out	ENV & COAST		592,000		4,908,000	592,000		
Public Convenience Modernisation Programme	PEOPLE & PL	12,000	300,000	300,000	300,000			
Public Convenience Refurb Scheme - Lym Quay Enhancem	PEOPLE & PL	230,000						
Public Convenience Refurb Scheme - Barton-on-Sea	PEOPLE & PL	200,000						
Public Convenience - Changing Places - Brockenhurst	PEOPLE & PL		43,000				43,000	
Public Convenience - Changing Places - Ringwood	PEOPLE & PL		112,000				112,000	
Public Convenience - Changing Places - Hythe	PEOPLE & PL		64,000				64,000	

CAPITAL PROJECTS REQUIREMENTS WITH FINANCING		PROJECT REQUIREMENTS £			ORIGINAL 2023/24 PROJECT FINANCING £				
		2022/23 £ Budget Revised (Nov. Cabinet)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	NFDC Resources / Loan	Better Care Fund	Grant / Income	DC / CIL
	Portfolio								
Health & Leisure Centres	PART & WELL	2,014,000							
Seed Capital - Youth Hubs	PART & WELL		100,000			100,000			
New Depot Site: Hardley	F,I & CS	500,000	4,875,000	1,625,000		4,875,000			
V&P; Replacement Programme	F,I & CS	1,800,000	3,062,000	1,309,000	996,000	3,062,000			
V&P; Replacement Programme - Waste Strategy	F,I & CS		150,000		5,840,000	150,000			
Smarter Working; Future Delivery	F,I & CS	75,000							
Economic Sustainability & Regeneration Projects	F,I & CS								
- Platinum Jubilee Business Park, Ringwood	F,I & CS	5,667,000	250,000			250,000			
- Station Road, New Milton	F,I & CS	5,500,000							
Open Space Schemes	P&I	730,000							
Mitigation Schemes	P&I	680,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000			1,000,000	
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME		21,138,000	15,131,000	8,821,000	17,025,000	9,579,000	1,300,000	3,252,000	1,000,000
									15,131,000
LOAN FINANCED					V&P	-3,062,000			
					80% of Economic Regeneration	-200,000			
RESIDUAL NFDC RESOURCES						6,317,000			

FULL COUNCIL – 27 FEBRUARY 2023 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Barry Dunning to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr Steve Davies

There is a concern with my constituents relating to “wheelie bin blight” where bins will be adopted in areas that are inappropriate, for example in terraced streets or flats.

We have been assured that the areas that are appropriate for wheelie bins will be identified.

Can the Portfolio Holder assure me that this consultation will be completed before the wheelie bins are introduced?

Answer:

We can confirm that intend to have the process of property surveying complete by the end of the year (2023). This will enable us to account for properties not suitable for the wheeled bin service during the rollout of the garden waste wheeled bins, that will start to be delivered to customers in January 2024.

We want to work with the external property survey supplier to devise a criteria for assessing the suitability of properties for wheeled bins to ensure continuity and fairness across the district. These criteria will include things like access, storage space available for wheeled bins, and the presence of steps required for wheeled bins. Gathering this information via a survey will help ensure smooth roll out of the new service for both residents and staff.

We are confident that accounting for access and storage constraints, combined with a clear communications policy will ensure that wheeled bins are not left on the public highway.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the guidance for sorting food waste appropriately, the Portfolio Holder confirmed there would be in due course a clear communications strategy for food waste and indeed all aspects of waste.

Question 2

From Cllr Kate Crisell to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

During the current planting season how many trees has the Council purchased for planting?

Answer:

We will have planted 296 new trees and 720 young tree whips across the Forest this planting season.

The figure includes 60 Trees celebrating the Queens Jubilee and the woodland planting with local school children at Fawley Fields, that were funded through grant funding.

Question 3

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing, Cllr Geoff Blunden

How many instances of criminal activities have been recorded by our CCTV cameras in our towns and villages of which how many have the Police been able to view and of those how many resulted in criminal prosecutions?

Answer:

Public space cameras operate in 7 towns and villages across the district providing an active deterrence to crime and disorder, ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit. The service monitors and reviews many hundreds of hours of CCTV footage which may be used in criminal or civil proceedings. Between January and December 2022, the service has actively tracked 527 offences consisting of burglaries, assaults, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and the locating of missing or vulnerable people. The CCTV control room transmit all live incidents to the Police Control Room so Police can actively view footage.

Evidence packages, consisting of many hours of footage, were supplied to the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for the use in criminal investigations over the last year.

Once the transfer of footage to the Police is complete, the constabulary become the data owner. The conclusion of any investigation or prosecutions can take many months, if not longer, and the CCTV service is not privy to prosecutions or case outcomes.

As Portfolio Holder, I am very proud that we are able to deliver a 24 hour CCTV service providing protection and support for both our residents and the Police.

Question 4

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

What are the ultimate intentions for funding for Eling Tide Mill? Withdrawal of funding at this time of hardship for all council facilities can only jeopardise the arrangement with the Town Council, since the lease of the listed tide mill and thus its upkeep rests ultimately with NFDC anyway.

Answer:

It is clear to the District Council that there is a need for a review of the Eling Tide Mill offer post covid. It has been suggested to the Town Council that work was commissioned to test whether the current offer will generate sufficient footfall in the future to realise the income needed. At the present time the Town Council has not produced an up to date Business Plan. The District Council has been working to address some of the maintenance issues that have been identified and will be responsible for undertaking these works. A survey is being commissioned to assess the condition of the bridge and the Quay wall and the District Council is funding this work. No funding has been withdrawn, the District Council continues to maintain the property and act in accordance with the Agreement that exists between it and the Town Council.

Note – in response to a supplementary question seeking a guarantee to assist with the building, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that as a Grade II listed building, the Council would meet its responsibility in this regard and would continue to.

Question 5

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services, Cllr Edward Heron

With the challenges faced with costs, delays in building works, among other issues does he believe the target of 600 homes will be achieved by 2026? And does the back and forth over Lymington Police Station highlight that this and similar sites could make a real difference to the Homes we need in our District?

Answer:

I do believe that the figure of 600 will be achieved. Regarding the back and forth, the figure of 600 is only achievable through the amazing work of the Council's team for acquiring and developing Council housing. The team are quite used to back and forth on many sites, and it is not unusual in the process.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on other opportunities in empty units, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the team was constantly looking at opportunities. He encouraged councillors to inform the team of any opportunities within their individual wards.

Question 6

From Cllr Christine Ward to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, Cllr Diane Andrews

Can you confirm that NFDC will be sending a full response to the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill; Reforms to National Planning Policy consultation and that the draft response will welcome the proposed strengthening of emphasis on placemaking and local design codes? Can I also ask whether officers will be making positive comment about the proposed strengthening of Green Belt policy in Plan Making?

Answer:

I can confirm that a full response will be sent to the consultation, the draft response to the 58 questions asked in the consultation will be considered by Cabinet on Wednesday 1st March. It is encouraging that the consultation reflects the importance of place making and using the planning system to create thriving environments where both people and nature thrive. Given the special and diverse character of our district it is also positive that the consultation recognises that local design codes are needed to retain local distinctiveness and sense of place.

Furthermore, given the national pressure to deliver housing, large amounts of Green Belt have been released nationally over the past decade or so. The proposed strengthening of Green Belt policy in Plan Making must be welcome if nationally and locally we are to retain the sense of openness in the landscape and the role this plays in our climate and nature and health and well-being agenda.

Question 7

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

I engaged with officers a while back regarding an abandoned hippo bag dumped on the corner of Bays Rod in Pennington. I was told it was not fly-tipping, and so was Hippo's responsibility. But if it is abandoned, then it is fly-tipping. I have not heard back on what

solution has been found and residents are shocked it has still not been removed. Can the Portfolio Holder guarantee it will be removed by NFDC this month?

Answer:

The 'Hippo Bag' was investigated by the Council's enforcement team. Contact was made with Hippo, who were unable to identify where the bag had come from. In the absence of a user of the bag or Hippo arranging collection, Council resources will be used to uplift the bag and dispose of it w/c 27th Feb. We will follow up with Hippo Customer services to make them aware of our resource cost to determine if this can be recovered.

Overall Fly Tipping is being addressed effectively across the Forest with Streetscene and Enforcement colleagues working effectively to gather data that can 'make the polluter pay', leading to increased fines and a reduction in Fly Tipping.

In 2022 calendar year there was a 10% reduction in flytipping incidents reported to NFDC by the public. In the same period there was a four-fold increase in flytipping investigations carried out, and an increase in fixed penalty notices from 27 in 2021 to 264 in 2022.

We hope to further enhance the impact by deploying mobile cameras and by employing a specialist who will help run campaigns to help reduce behaviour which results in litter being dropped and fly tipping by building respect for the local environments.

Note – this question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr J Davies.

Second Questions

Question 8

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

Can the Leader of the Council assure us that devastating scenes reported in January from the freeport in Teesside, of dead and dying marine life will not happen here and that any industry that could threaten wildlife in this manner will not be allowed to be part of the local freeport in our area?

Answer:

As this Council has done many times before I can assure Cllr Rackham and those who raise related concerns, that the designation of areas as tax sites within the Solent Freeport does not change any regulatory framework that exists and so all the protections and oversight of regulatory bodies such as the Environment Agency remain in place.

Note – in response to a supplementary question with regard to Dibden Bay, the Leader reiterated that the environmental protections remained in place.