

NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting: CABINET

Date and Time: WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2024, AT 10.00 AM

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

Enquiries to: democratic@nfdc.gov.uk
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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) on items within the Cabinet'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 Friday, 2 February 2024.

Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

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This agenda can be viewed online (<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk>).

It can also be made available on audio tape, in Braille and large print.

AGENDA

Apologies

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 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 receive any public participation in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme.

4. FINANCIAL MONITORING (Pages 3 - 14)

5. ASSET MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 (Pages 15 - 24)

6. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 (Pages 25 - 36)

7. COMMUNITY GRANTS 2024/25 (Pages 37 - 66)]

8. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (Pages 67 - 86)

9. TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (Pages 87 - 122)

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2024 (Pages 123 - 124)

To:	Councillors	Councillors
	Jill Cleary (Chairman)	Jeremy Heron
	Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)	Dan Poole
	Geoffrey Blunden	Derek Tipp

FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT (based on Performance April to December 2023 inclusive)

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i) notes the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund (section 5), Capital (section 6), and HRA (section 7).
- ii) supports the proposed approach (outlined in para 5.11) to utilise the additional investment income and one-off VAT refund to increase the Revenue Contribution to Capital Programme financing, in order to support a reduction in capital financing costs over the medium term.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Following the approval of the Original Budget for 2023/24 in February 2023, this report provides an update on the General Fund, Capital and Housing Revenue Account budgets, adjusting for any budget changes now required.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Financial Monitoring is an important feature in the management of the Council's finances as it gives an opportunity to reflect on variations as against the latest set budget and reflect on the impact that these variations may have over the period covered by the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

4. PAY AWARD IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The 2023/24 pay award has now been settled. The financial implications are summarised in paragraphs 5.2 and 6.3.

5. GENERAL FUND REVISED PROJECTION

5.1 A General Fund budget of **£22.468 million** for 2023/24 was agreed by Council in February 2023 (£22.851 million at Portfolio analysis level, with other budget elements reducing this to this lower General Fund budget figure).

5.2 Net reduced budget requirements of £100,000 were reported to Cabinet in September and further net budget reductions of £423,000 reported to Cabinet in November, reducing the total budget requirement to **£21.945 million**. The November report also identified, but had not allocated to Portfolios, anticipated additional costs arising from the pay award, which had not been settled at that time. The award has now been agreed and final additional budget requirement is £654,000. This has been allocated across Portfolios within the November 23 Latest Budget column within Appendix 1. The adjusted November total budget requirement figure is £131,000 higher than the original budget, at **£22.599 million**:

Summary Table	2023/24 Budget £'000
Original Budget	22,468
September Report	(100)
November Report	(423)
Pay Award Implications	+654
Revised Budget to end of November	22,599

5.3 The latest budget variations now reported include net favourable expenditure variations of £348,000 and net income increases of £1.683 million. In addition, £605,000 has been rephased to future years. Major variations are detailed below (ordered in accordance with appendix 1) with full variations listed in Appendix 1.

5.4 **Community, Safety and Wellbeing (Housing, Communities and Governance)**

i) **Health and Leisure Centres (-£43,000)** - Due to unfavourable weather and supply chain issues, remaining paint work repairs to the steels at Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre have been delayed until next financial year. This will be funded from the proposed increased maintenance allowance for the centres next year and therefore a saving of £43,000 will arise this year.

5.5 **Finance and Corporate (Corporate Resources and Transformation)**

i) **Business Improvement (-£45,000)** – Due to staff vacancies there will be savings in the Business Improvement Service.

ii) **Commercial Properties (£70,000)** – There will be a reduction in Commercial Property rental income due to a vacancy while dilapidations works are tendered.

iii) **Eling Tide Mill (£35,000)** – Budgetary provision of £35,000 is required for urgent feasibility study works at Eling Tide Mill.

Other variations relevant to central finance and corporate activity, but not directly assigned to the Portfolio in terms of the Portfolio level summary of the General Fund budget include;

- iv) **Interest Earnings** – The Council, through its SLA with the County Council have looked to maximise the potential additional revenues to be generated because of increased interest rates. As a result, Treasury Management earnings are significantly ahead of the originally budgeted position, and are anticipated to result in additional interest earnings of £1.5 million for the year.
- v) **VAT Refund** – As a result of HMRC's decision to reclassify Sporting Services as a non-business activity for Local Authorities, the Council claimed and received a £668k one-off refund of VAT paid on its leisure services in previous years.
- vi) **ATC North Wing Roof Repairs (-£45,000)** – Funding of £45,000 has been rephased into 2024/25 for works on the Appletree Court North Wing roof.

5.6 **Housing and Homelessness (Housing, Communities and Governance)**

- i) **Homelessness (-£250,000)** – Additional budgetary provision of £1 million was allocated for homelessness costs in 2023/24, to reflect actual costs in 2022/23. Due partly to the increased availability of temporary accommodation units arising from the Development Programme and the work of the Homelessness team, £250,000 of this additional provision is unlikely now to be required.
- ii) **Housing Benefits (Private Sector Leased Properties) (£255,000)** – Housing Benefit payments on Private Sector Leased Properties are subject to a threshold for Government Subsidy reimbursement. Payments above the threshold in 2023/24 are estimated at £255,000 for which no subsidy will be received.
- iii) **Ukraine Families Housing - (-£560,000)** - The Council has received £892,000 revenue funding to assist Ukrainian Families. It is anticipated that £560,000 will not be utilised this year and will be transferred to a specific reserve for use in 2024/25 and future years.

5.7 **Planning and Economy (Place, Operations and Sustainability)**

Current national financial conditions have resulted in a slowdown in activity relating to the housing market. This has impacted income in a number of the Council's services where demand is related to that market.

- i) **Building Control - (£75,000)** – Income for the year is currently predicted to fall short of the £550,000 budget by £75,000. The overall loss on the fee-earning account will be transferred at yearend to the accrued balance in the Building Control Breakeven Reserve.
- ii) **Development Management - (£20,000)** – Planning fees income is currently predicted to fall short of the revised £726,000 budget by £65,000. This will be offset by salary savings of £45,000 due to staff vacancies.

- iii) **Land charges - (£20,000)** – Income for the year is currently predicted to fall short of the revised £310,000 budget by £20,000.
- 5.8 The overall impact of all variations results in an updated General Fund Budget of **£20.493 million**; a reduction of £1.975 million from the original estimate. The Council has been able to absorb the additional pay award costs and, thanks largely to the investment earning position and claimed VAT windfall is now able to contribute an additional £1.975 million in Revenue Contributions to assist with funding the capital programme. This is of particular benefit given pressure on capital resources in future years, as seen through the Council's proposed Capital Strategy, and will support a reduction in forecast capital financing costs going forward over the medium term.
- 5.9 The revised General Fund Budget for 2023/24 can be seen at Appendix 1, with further details on the variations being reported included within Appendix 2.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVISED PROJECTION

- 6.1 After allowing for contributions of £150,000 from earmarked reserves for the continuing Stock Condition Survey work, a break-even HRA budget for 2023/24 was agreed in February 2023, with a Revenue Account contribution of £9.700 million supporting the financing of the £27.610 million HRA Capital Programme.
- 6.2 Budget adjustments totalling £110,000 were included in the first monitoring report to Cabinet in September and an additional £96,000 in the second report to Cabinet in November.
- 6.3 The November Cabinet report also highlighted estimated additional unbudgeted pay award costs of £230,000 which had not been allocated to services. Following settlement of the award actual additional costs are now estimated to be £260,000 and budgetary provision has been allocated across the service areas and shown within the November 2023 column of Appendix 3.
- 6.4 This report identifies net budget reductions of £45,000, resulting in an overall net additional budget requirement for the year of £421,000. The capital Major Repairs budget has been reduced by £204,000 to partly fund the additional costs. This leaves a balance of £217,000 not yet funded but work will continue over the remainder of the year to mitigate this net overspend. New variations are detailed in the following paragraphs and summarised in Appendix 3.
- 6.5 **Dwelling Rents - (-£65,000)** – Income loss on void properties has been reviewed and the previously reported anticipated additional loss of £100,000 can now be reduced by £65,000.
- 6.6 **Garage rents - (£46,000)** – Rental income is anticipated to be £46,000 less than budget due to the impact of reduced lettings, partly in preparation for development opportunities on garage sites.
- 6.7 **Interest - (£63,000)** – Increases in interest rates and higher than anticipated reserves balances brought forward from 2022/23 will result in additional interest earnings of £200,000 but will also result in additional interest costs on internal borrowing of £263,000.

- 6.8 **Repairs and Maintenance - (overall £nil)** – Budget of £24,000 has been allocated to purchase some high-level working equipment. This has been funded by virement from the capital Major Repairs Programme.
- 6.9 **General Management - (-£70,000)** – Staff vacancies in the Housing Development Team have resulted in savings of £70,000.
- 6.10 **Other - (-£70,000)** – Latest estimates anticipate a reduction of £90,000 in the budget requirement for utility bills in older persons accommodation. This saving is offset by an increased need of £20,000 in the trees' maintenance budget.
- 6.11 **Homeless Assistance/Service Charges - (£27,000)** – Additional budget of £51,000 is required for council tax costs on new temporary accommodation units. This is offset by additional service charge income of £24,000.
- 6.12 The updated HRA budget can be seen at Appendix 3.

7. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account)

- 7.1 A Capital Programme budget of **£42.641 million** for 2023/24 was agreed by Council in February 2023.
- 7.2 Revisions to the programme, reported to Cabinet in September, increased anticipated spend by £276,000 and this was increased by £164,000 in the November report to Cabinet, resulting in an updated approved programme of **£43.081 million**.
- 7.3 The latest forecast confirms variations totalling £100,000 and net rephasings of £1.205 million (£469,000 from 2022/23 and £1.674 million to 24/25). The variations are detailed below:

Variations £26,000

- **Planning and Economy** – Mitigation Schemes. On 2 November 2022 Cabinet approved the allocation of £100,000 Community Infrastructure Levy contributions for the Football Foundation project at Ringwood. These funds have now been released.
- **Housing Revenue Account** – The Major Repairs programme has been reduced by a further £24,000 and the Estate Improvements budget by £50,000 to part fund the current predicted overspend on the revenue budget.

Rephasings £1.205 million

- **Environment and Sustainability** – The Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study scheme (-£123,000) will now commence in 2024/25.
- **Finance and Corporate** – New Hardley Depot Site. It is currently anticipated that £1.551million of this scheme will be rephased into 2024/25.

- **Housing Revenue Account** – In 2022/23 the Fire Risk Assessment Works budget was underspent by £565,000. Initially a rephasing amount of £116,000 was identified in the September financial monitoring report to Cabinet but current spend predictions are that the remaining £469,000 now needs to be allocated for this year.

7.4 The changes, as above, result in an updated Capital Programme Budget of **£41.902 million** (Appendix 4).

8. CRIME AND DISORDER / EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no Crime & Disorder, Equality & Diversity or Environmental implications arising directly from this report.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

9.1 The third quarter monitoring report does not highlight any concerns, conversely I am pleased to see additional income within the General Fund. This positive position will enable an enhanced level of financing support to the Council's Capital programme, further delaying the need for external borrowing, in turn reducing overall costs of finance.

For Further Information Please Contact:

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Background Papers:

Cabinet 1 November 2023
Cabinet 6 September 2023
Cabinet 15 February 2023

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2023/24

REVISED GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023/24

	Feb-23	Nov-23	February'24			
	2023/24 £'000's Original Budget	2023/24 £'000's Latest Budget	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Income	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Rephasings	2023/24 £'000's Updated Budget
PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS						
Community, Safety and Wellbeing	3,595	3,389	-43	0	0	3,346
Environment and Sustainability	8,083	8,344	0	0	0	8,344
Finance and Corporate	3,450	3,259	-10	70	0	3,319
Housing and Homelessness	3,136	2,932	-250	255	-560	2,377
Leader	1,173	1,247	0	0	0	1,247
Planning and Economy	3,414	3,700	-45	160	0	3,815
Multi Portfolio adjustments - To be allocated	0	352	0	0	-45	307
	22,851	23,223	-348	485	-605	22,755
Reversal of Depreciation	-1,823	-1,773				-1,773
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Revenue Reserves	-283	-524	0	-75	605	6
NET PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS	20,745	20,926	-348	410	0	20,988
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,876	1,826				1,826
Contribution to Capital Programme Financing (RCCO)	700	700	1,975			2,675
Interest Earnings (Net)	-837	-837		-1,500		-2,337
VAT Refund	0	0		-668		-668
New Homes Bonus	-16	-16				-16
GENERAL FUND NET BUDGET REQUIREMENTS	22,468	22,599	1,627	-1,758	0	22,468
COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION						
Budget Requirement	22,468	22,599	1,627	-1,758	0	22,468
Less: Settlement Funding Assessment						
Lower Tier Service Grant	0	0				0
Services Grant	-155	-155				-155
Guarantee Grant (MHCLG)	-699	-699				-699
Business Rates Baseline	-4,147	-4,147				-4,147
	-5,001	-5,001	0	0	0	-5,001
Locally Retained Business Rates	-3,575	-3,575				-3,575
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Business Rates	390	390				390
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Council Tax	-262	-262				-262
Use of (-) Variation Reserves	0	-131	-1,627	1,758	0	0
COUNCIL TAX	14,020	14,020	0	0	0	14,020
TAX BASE NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	72,271.70	72,271.70				72,271.70
COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY	193.99	193.99				193.99
GENERAL FUND BALANCE 31 MARCH	3,000	3,000				3,000

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2023/24

VARIATION ANALYSIS GENERAL FUND 2023/24

	Nov-23	February-24			
	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's	2023/24 £'000's
	Previous Variations	New Variations Expend.	New Variations Income	New Variations Rephasings	Updated Budget
PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS					
Community, Safety and Wellbeing					
Previously Reported	-283				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	77				
Health and Leisure Centres maintenance, virement to Eling Tide Mill (see F&C)		-43			
	-206	-43	0	0	-249
Environment and Sustainability					
Previously Reported	-243				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	504				
	261	0	0	0	261
Finance and Corporate					
Previously Reported	-27				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	186				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Contingency	-350				
Business Improvement Salary Savings		-45			
Commercial Investment Rental Income			70		
Eling Tide Mill feasibility study virement from Health & Leisure Centres maint.		35			
Housing Benefits/PSL's					
	-191	-10	70	0	-131
Housing and Homelessness					
Previously Reported	-302				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	98				
Homelessness		-250			
Housing Benefit subsidy limitation on Private Sector Leasing			255		
Ukraine Families Housing				-560	
	-204	-250	255	-560	-759
Leader					
Previously Reported	66				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	8				
	74	0	0	0	74
Planning and Economy					
Previously Reported	155				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	131				
Building Control - income shortfall			75		
Planning - Development Management - Planning Fees Income Shortfall			65		
Planning - Development Management - Salary savings (vacancies)		-45			
Land Charges - income shortfall			20		
	286	-45	160	0	401
Portfolio adjustments - Non Direct					
Previously Reported	352				
Appletree Court North Wing Roof				-45	
	352	0	0	-45	307
TOTAL PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS	372	-348	485	-605	-96
NON-PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS					
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-241	0	-75	605	289
TOTAL NON-PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS	-241	0	-75	605	289
GRAND TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS (Credited to (-) / Debited from (+) Budget Reserves)	131	-348	410	0	193

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2023/24

REVISED HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET

2023/24

	Feb-23	Nov-23	February-24	
	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24	2023/24
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
	Original	Latest	New	Updated
	Budget	Budget	Variations	Budget
INCOME				
Dwelling Rents	-30,227	-30,127	-65	-30,192
Non Dwelling Rents	-720	-720	46	-674
Charges for Services & Facilities	-849	-849	-24	-873
Contributions towards Expenditure	-60	-60		-60
Interest Receivable	-378	-378	-200	-578
Sales Administration Recharge	-33	-33		-33
Shared Amenities Contribution	-286	-286		-286
TOTAL INCOME	-32,553	-32,453	-243	-32,696
EXPENDITURE				
Repairs & Maintenance				
Cyclical Maintenance	1,640	1,558	6	1,564
Reactive Maintenance	4,456	4,765	18	4,783
Supervision & Management				
General Management	7,132	7,221	-70	7,151
Special Services	1,846	1,894	-70	1,824
Homeless Assistance	144	146	51	197
Rents, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	89	89		89
Provision for Bad Debt	150	150		150
Capital Financing Costs - Interest/Debt Management	4,522	4,522	263	4,785
Capital Financing Costs - Internal Borrowing	0	0		0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	19,979	20,345	198	20,543
HRA OPERATING SURPLUS(-)	-12,574	-12,108	-45	-12,153
Contribution to Capital - supporting Housing Strategy	9,700	9,700		9,700
Capital Financing Costs - Principal	3,024	3,024		3,024
HRA Total Annual Surplus(-) / Deficit	150	616	-45	571
Use of HRA Reserve for Major Projects	-150	-150		-150
Return to Earmarked Reserves (ICT Rephasing)				0
HRA TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS(-) / DEFICIT	0	466	-45	421

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2023/24

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

	Portfolio	Feb-23	Nov-23	February-24		2023/24 £'000's Updated Budget
		2023/24 £'000's Original Budget	2023/24 £'000's Latest Budget	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Rephasing	
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	LEADER/ALL	42	56			56
Rural England Prosperity Fund	LEADER/ALL	240	240			240
Disabled Facilities Grants	HSG (GF)	1,300	1,300			1,300
Sustainability Fund - Unallocated	ENV & SUSTAIN	250	250			250
South East Regional Coastal Monitoring Prog (18-27)	ENV & SUSTAIN	2,631	2,543			2,543
Milford Promenade Handrail	ENV & SUSTAIN		6			6
Barton Horizontal Directional Drilling Trails	ENV & SUSTAIN	10	60			60
Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	100	123		-123	
Waste Strategy Container Roll Out	ENV & SUSTAIN	592	592			592
Public Convenience Modernisation Programme	ENV & SUSTAIN	300	87	-63		24
Public Convenience Refurb. Scheme - Barton-on-Sea	ENV & SUSTAIN		258			258
Public Convenience Refurb. Scheme - Beaulieu	ENV & SUSTAIN		15			15
Public Convenience Changing Places	ENV & SUSTAIN	219	214	31		245
Public Convenience Modernisation Programme - Tech. advisor	ENV & SUSTAIN		100	32		132
Health & Leisure Centres	COMM S&W		305			305
New Depot Site: Hardley	FIN & CORP	4,875	4,875		-1,551	3,324
V&P; Replacement Programme	FIN & CORP	3,062	2,738			2,738
V&P; Replacement Programme - Waste Strategy	FIN & CORP	150	193			193
Platinum Jubilee Business Park, Ringwood	FIN & CORP	250	250			250
Mitigation Schemes	PLAN & ECON	1,000	1,250	100		1,350
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME		15,031	15,455	100	-1,674	13,881
HRA - Major Repairs	HRA	7,760	7,560	-24		7,536
Major Structural Refurbishments	HRA	1,000	1,000			1,000
Fire Risk Assessment Works	HRA	2,000	2,116		469	2,585
Estate Improvements	HRA	200	200	-50		150
Robertshaw House	HRA	500	500			500
Development Strategy	HRA	15,200	15,200			15,200
Disabled Facilities Grants	HRA	950	1,050			1,050
TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME		27,610	27,626	-74	469	28,021
GRAND TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME		42,641	43,081	26	-1,205	41,902

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2023/24

VARIATION ANALYSIS GENERAL FUND 2023/24

	Nov'23 2023/24 £'000's Previous Variations	February-24			
		2023/24 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Income	2023/24 £'000's New Variations Rephasings	2023/24 £'000's Updated Budget
DIRECTORATE ADJUSTMENTS					
Corporate Resources & Transformation					
Previously Reported	458				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	277				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Contingency	-350				
Health and Leisure Centres maint., virement to Eling Tide Mill (see F&C)		-43			
Business Improvement Salary Savings		-45			
Commercial Investment Rental Income			70		
Eling Tide Mill feasibility study virement from H&L Centres maint.		35			
Housing Benefits/PSL's					
Appletree Court North Wing Roof				-45	
TOTAL Corporate Resources & Transformation	385	-53	70	-45	357
Housing, Communities & Governance					
Previously Reported	-738				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	96				
Homelessness		-250			
Housing Benefit subsidy limitation on Private Sector Leasing			255		
Ukraine Families Housing				-560	
TOTAL Housing, Communities & Governance	-642	-250	255	-560	-1197
Place, Operations & Sustainability					
Previously Reported	-2				
Previously Reported - 23/24 Pay Award Implications	631				
Building Control - income shortfall			75		
Planning - Development Management - Planning Fees Income Shortfall			65		
Planning - Development Management - Salary savings (vacancies)		-45			
Land Charges - income shortfall			20		
TOTAL Place, Operations & Sustainability	629	-45	160	0	744
TOTAL DIRECTORATE ADJUSTMENTS	372	-348	485	-605	-96
NON-DIRECTORATE ADJUSTMENTS					
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-241		-75	605	289
TOTAL NON-DIRECTORATE ADJUSTMENTS	-241	0	-75	605	289
GRAND TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS (Credited to (-) / Debited from (+) Budget Reserves)	131	-348	410	0	193

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ASSET MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That the Cabinet approve and recommend to Full Council that:

1.1.1 The schedule of projects, as included at Appendix 1 and 2 be approved within the 2024/25 budget, noting this commits the Council to expenditure beyond 2024/25 whereby a project commences in 2024/25 and extends into future years.

1.1.2 The Vehicle & Plant replacement programme be approved for a 2 year period, covering purchases due in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

2.1 This report provides the proposed revenue funded Asset Maintenance & Replacement programme (AMR) and General Fund Capital programme for 2024/25 and outline budgets to 2026/27.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council's revenue budget includes large sums for the maintenance and cyclical replacement of Council owned assets. The AMR programme budget for 2023/24 totalled £2.050 million to the General Fund and £340,000 to the HRA (£2.390 million total shown within appendix 1), with a further £725,000 of requirements funded by the General Fund and HRA for the ICT Digital Strategy (£625,000) and Community Grants (£100,000).

3.2 The December 2023 Medium Term Financial Plan included a revenue budget allowance to cover the AMR programme for 2024/25 of £2.500 million for the General Fund and £350,000 to the HRA (total £2.850 million). The increase from 2023/24 related to inflationary pressures with regards to the Vehicle and Plant replacement programme, as well as an uplift to the Health & Leisure Maintenance budget facilitated by the increased contractual income position with Freedom Leisure. There are currently no further planned adjustments to the overall programme budget over the period covered by the current Medium Term Financial Plan.

3.3 Service Managers were asked to come up with their proposed projects for 2024/25 with a strong brief that the programme had to consist of essential items and be realistic in terms of timeframes and deliverability. The programme sums now being proposed matches the funding allocated, after work was required to reprioritise projects to align to the sums available.

3.4 The proposed General Fund Capital Programme for 2024/25 totals £16.579 million. Projects are funded by NFDC resources (capital reserve and receipts received), various grants / funds and Developer Contributions / CIL. This programme total does not include the Asset Investment Strategy, due to uncertainty in the timing of the purchases.

4. PROPOSED ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2024/25

4.1 The bid categories for the submitted programme for 2024/25 were:

- 1 – Protect & Maintain Front Line Service Delivery
- 2 – Efficiency / Savings / Income Generation
- 3 – Improve / Enhance Value of Asset

4.2 The summary programme covering 2024/25 – 2027/28 is included as appendix 1. The budget is monitored at this overall summary level to allow for sufficient flexibility should more urgent projects come to light during the financial year.

4.3 Further Information Relating to Projects

4.3.1 Health & Leisure Centres Annual Maintenance Programme £750,000

During 2019, a full condition survey of the Council's 5 Leisure Centres was procured by the Council and carried out by a third-party specialist. The resultant report identified a works schedule covering a 15 year period to maintain the centres at the current standard/condition. Annually, this report will be reviewed and will inform the necessary maintenance required at the Leisure Centres. Due to the contractual income increase from contract year 2 to contract year 3, the maintenance budget can be increased by £300,000, with £50,000 reserved for resource to enable project delivery, and £250,000 placed in the maintenance budget. The prioritised programme of works, which will include the cyclical replacement of end-of-life plant with newer more efficient alternatives, will be agreed with the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources & Transformation.

4.3.2 Offices and Depots £170,000 (Plus £45,000 rephasing from 2023/24)

- ATC North Wing Externals and Roof (aborted scheme in 2023/24 due to the detection of bats). The project will include guttering, loose tiles, fascias, soffits, windows repointing.
- Marsh Lane Depot Vehicle Workshop Steels - Structural steel supports at front of vehicle workshop building require stripping and treating. Column bases also need breaking out and re-laying.

4.3.3 Cemeteries Footpaths £40,000

Budget provision of £40,000 is being set aside within the programme to;

- remove and dispose of low traffic paths which are beyond repair and to make good, to ensure safe access.
- create safe compound spaces containing tap and disposal area.
- repair defect, failed paths and operations access routes, which are creating a safety hazard, to ensure safe access.
- ensure the cemetery integrity and appropriate access.

4.3.4 Eling Experience £40,000

Budget provision of £40,000 is being set aside within the programme to carry out works identified from the Toll Bridge and Quayside condition surveys. Feasibility

surveys on required works related to the deuteriation of the undercroft wall and ground beams that support the machinery at the Tide Mill are on-going. A follow up project bid may be made during the financial year to carry out further works.

4.3.5 Water Safety £21,000

The budget will fund the undertaking of appropriate risk assessments to fully understand and identify the risks to users and to ensure adequate mitigation measures are put in place. This bid is to enable a competent authority to be employed to undertake this work, along with an expected replacement/updating of some signage and public rescue equipment.

4.3.6 Public Convenience - Minor works £28,000

The Public Convenience maintenance budget requires additional funding to adequately maintain and repair the conveniences located throughout the District.

4.3.7 ICT Equipment Replacement Programme £150,000

The Council invested significantly in new devices over the period 2017-2019. Some of the devices will reach beyond their 4 year suggested useful life during 2023/24, and so a cyclical replacement programme will need to continue during the period covered by this Medium Term Financial Plan.

4.3.8 Vehicles & Plant Replacement Programme £1,650,000

Members will note that the replacement of Vehicles & Plant (V&P) occurs on both the revenue AMR programme and the Capital Programme. The Council's policy is to capitalise individual items with a value greater than £10k and then depreciate these over their estimated useful life. The capital programme therefore includes the cash amount required to purchase the V&P, and the revenue programme includes the depreciation charge. The depreciation charge to revenue then makes a direct contribution towards the capital cost through a charge known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The significant Capital Outlay required will result in older less efficient vehicles being replaced with the latest more efficient models.

The 2024/25 programme includes cyclical replacement of 'standard' fleet vehicles and plant, as well as the costs associated with the roll out of the waste strategy, including the estimated cost of containers. The £1.650 million budget here does not relate to the additional vehicles or the capitalisation of the containers, on the assumption that new burdens funding and EPR income will offset the costs of these. Further separate reporting will cover this matter in more detail, pending forthcoming clarity on the funding support from central government.

4.3.9 Programme Contingency £41,000

To provide cover for inevitable project variations as they arise, a programme contingency of £41,000 has been allowed for.

- 4.4 The programme as outlined above totals £2.890 million. Of this total, approximately £390,000 is rechargeable to the HRA leaving £2.500 million to be funded via the General Fund. The increase to the HRA will be accommodated within the detailed budget planning for 24/25.

4.5 Projects that didn't make it through to the final prioritised programme were as follows:

1. Marsh Lane Depot Fuel Tank Replacement – will be picked up in a broader review of the depot to include necessary infrastructure requirements aligned to a new fleet strategy (in development throughout 2024/25)
2. Cemeteries Footpaths – a phased approach will be required pertaining to 1 project a year.
3. ICT Equipment Replacement – the amount requested was £30,000 more than resources available, so additional prioritisation will be required to fit the replacement programme in with the funding available.

4.6 Other One-Off Funded Programmes

4.6.1 Budget provision of £625,000 has been provided for projects in the ICT Digital Strategy. This cost is allocated c75% to the General Fund and c25% to the HRA.

4.6.2 The Community Grants Panel have been given a maximum budget of £100,000 for one-off construction grant applications for 2023/24. The Panel are aware this is a financial ceiling, and not a target. Currently the recommendation from the Task and Finish group to the Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel is £96,040.

	General Fund £'000	HRA £'000	TOTAL £'000
ICT Strategy	500	125	625
Community Grants	96		96
	596	125	721

4.6.3 The above will require financial resources, funded by the revenue budget or reserves and will be included on the Medium - Term Financial Planning Reports through Cabinet.

5. GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25

5.1 The capital programme consists of projects funded by NFDC resources (capital reserve and receipts received), various grants / funds and Developer Contributions / CIL.

5.2 The proposed programme for 2024/25 totalling £16.579 million including the outline financing is included as appendix 2. The project proposals for a 3 year period have been included for overall context. Where a project commences (or continues into) in 24/25 and spans several financial years, a commitment to start in 24/25 is a commitment to approve the funding required to complete over the period of the programme. Where a sum is included in future years, it is not requiring approval now, but is included for completeness and overall programme context; approval for these items will come at the appropriate point in the budget setting cycle for the year in question. Due to the lead in time of the Vehicles and Plant Acquisition programme, the programme sums for 24/25 and 25/26 will be approved now to enable necessary work to commence in the year prior to when the new V&P will actually be delivered.

5.3 Further Information Relating to NFDC Funded Projects

5.3.1 Sustainability and Climate Action £250,000

The Council has committed an annual budget of £250,000 to support the Climate Strategy and action plan.

5.3.2 Milford Sea Wall £100,000

The funding will be used for a combination of rock revetment and beach recharge.

5.3.3 New Depot Site £4.372 million for 24/25 and £104,000 for 25/26

Total funding of £7.8 million has been approved over the period of this capital programme for the new depot project at Hardley Industrial Estate, as a replacement for the Claymeadow depot. This scheme has commenced and is scheduled to complete in the winter of 2024.

5.3.4 Ringwood Depot: Extension and Works £250,000

Discussions are ongoing with the County Council around an extension of the leased space that the Council occupies at the Ringwood Depot site. When new terms are agreed, it is likely that the Council will need to facilitate improvement works to the site to take full advantage that the additional space will give to NFDC operations.

5.3.5 Vehicles & Plant £2.102 million for 24/25 and £996,000 for 25/26

The significant Capital Outlay required will result in older less efficient vehicles being replaced with the latest more efficient models. For 24/25 the replacement programme for the refuse and recycling part of the fleet focuses in the main on vehicles which can be utilised on our current service, whilst also being suitable for a future service, albeit in some cases with some retrospective modifications likely.

5.3.6 Vehicles and Plant – New Waste Strategy Vehicles £885,000 for 2024/25 and £3.730 million for 2025/26

Preparations are underway for the commencement of the new wheeled bin Waste Service to go live from 2025.

5.3.7 Vehicles and Plant – New Waste Strategy Containers £1.025 million for 2024/25 and £4.550 million for 2025/26

The procurement of wheeled bins and food caddies has commenced, with costs falling in both 2024/25 and 2025/26.

5.3.8 Asset Modernisation Programme £300,000

The standard sum of £300,000 has been allowed for within the Capital Programme towards asset modernisation. The asset to be allocated funding in 2024/25 is the Hurst Road Public Convenience at Milford-on-Sea.

5.4 Further Information Relating to Part or Non-NFDC Funded Projects

5.4.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund £208,000

The Council was awarded £1 million from the UK SPF. An investment plan was approved by the Council and project delivery is underway.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

5.4.2 Rural England Prosperity Fund £300,000

The Council was awarded £540,115 as a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Fuller information related to this scheme was reported to the Cabinet in December 2023.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

5.4.3 Disabled Facilities Grants £1.5 million PA

The Council facilitates the delivery of Disabled Facility Adaptations each year, using central government 'Better Care Fund' to pay for said adaptations. The Council's contribution is in the staffing resource to deliver the adaptations.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

5.4.4 South-East Strategic Coastal Monitoring £2.667 million / £2.829 million / £2.216 million

This project is the continuation of the regional coastal monitoring programme, for the next phase that will go through to 2027. The figures above are for the full approval for the SE region as managed and co-ordinated by NFDC.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

5.4.5 Barton Horizontal Directional Drilling Trials £260,000

Works expected to take the form of test drainage trials to determine suitability and effectiveness of the system. The aim being to control and manage groundwater levels to reduce erosion risk.

Regular monitoring will be required post completion of the project.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £120,000

5.4.6 Hurst Spit Shingle Source Study £100,000 / £58,000

The existing Hurst Spit Beach Management Plan (BMP) has been in existence since 1996. The plan requires updating to consider additional data, past performance of the Spit and future management operations. This study will enable this work to be undertaken, enabling the BMP to be updated in line with current practices.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

5.4.7 Milford-On-Sea Beach and Cliff Study £100,000 / £180,000

This project is a follow on from the Westover urgent works undertaken during 2020. The expected scope and coastal frontage will be broadened to consider the wider defended Milford frontage.

The commencement and delivery of this project will be subject to the outcomes of the Christchurch Bay Strategy Study.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil 24/25 / £50,000 25/26

5.4.8 ATC East Wing Boiler Replacement £160,000

The Council has submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme for a project to replace an end-of-life boiler with a more energy efficient alternative (Air Source Heat Pump). We will know if our bid is successful in March 2024.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £62,000

5.4.9 Developer Contributions / CIL £2.0 million / £1.0 million / 1.0 million

A separate report will confirm the proposed projects, with the Capital Programme at this stage setting aside a gross overall budget to be set for drawdown for individual project delivery.

NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil

6. CRIME & DISORDER / EQUALITY & DIVERSITY / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As the Council invests in the maintenance and replacement of its assets, it will do so ensuring environmental implications are considered and where it can, the delivery of energy efficiencies, whether that be in lighting / heating or in more economic vehicles, will be at the forefront of the Council's spending decisions.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The AMR programme represents a significant element of the Council's annual net expenditure. The prioritised General Fund programme matches the budget outlined for 2024/25 at £2.500 million and the HRA proportion at £390,000 will be accommodated within the detailed budget planning.
- 7.2 The Council is committed to the continuation of its investment in ICT and the financial implications to deliver the strategy will be included in the appropriate Medium Term Financial Planning Reports through Cabinet.
- 7.3 The General fund Capital programme is funded in several ways, and the net NFDC funding requirement for 2024/25 after internal borrowing is taken into account is £5.454 million.

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 18 January 2024 supported both programmes for approval.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 9.1 With the recent rises in inflation the delivery of the Asset Maintenance and Capital Programme has been challenging, however I am confident that we are, within this forward looking programme, striking the right balance between maximising the resources we have available across our priority areas.

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Background Papers

Published Papers

ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Health & Leisure Centres	500	750		
Offices, Depots and Outlying Buildings	200	170		
Feasibility Surveys	10			
Deployable CCTV Cameras	15			
Programme Contingency	65	41		
Cemeteries Footpaths		40		
Eling Experience		40		
Water Safety		21		
Public Conveniences		28		
	790	1,090	1,090	1,090
ICT Replacement Programme	150	150	150	150
Vehicles and Plant (Depreciation / MRP)	1,450	1,650	1,650	1,650
	2,390	2,890	2,890	2,890
Less: Proportion allocated to HRA	-340	-390	-390	-390
TOTAL GENERAL FUND PROGRAMME	2,050	2,500	2,500	2,500

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023-2027

CAPITAL PROJECTS REQUIREMENTS WITH FINANCING

	Portfolio	PROJECT REQUIREMENTS £			ORIGINAL 2024/25 PROJECT FINANCING £			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	NFDC Resources / Loan	Better Care Fund	Grant / Income	DC / CIL
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	LEADER / ALL	208,000					208,000	
Rural England Prosperity Fund	LEADER	300,000					300,000	
Disabled Facilities Grants	HOU (GF)	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000		1,500,000		
Sustainability Fund - Unallocated	ENV & SUSTAIN	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000			
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (22-27)	ENV & SUSTAIN	2,667,000	2,829,000	2,216,000			2,667,000	
Barton Horizontal Directional Drilling Trials	ENV & SUSTAIN	260,000			120,000		140,000	
Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	100,000	58,000				100,000	
Milford Beach and Cliff Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	100,000	180,000				100,000	
Milford - Sea Wall Construction Works	ENV & SUSTAIN	100,000			100,000			
New Depot Site: Hardley	FIN & CORP	4,372,000	104,000		4,372,000			
Ringwood Depot: Extension and Works	FIN & CORP	250,000			250,000			
V&P; Replacement Programme	FIN & CORP	2,102,000	996,000	1,000,000	2,102,000			
V&P; Replacement Programme - Waste Strategy Vehicles	FIN & CORP	885,000	3,730,000	453,000	885,000			
V&P; Replacement Programme - Waste Strategy Containe	FIN & CORP	1,025,000	4,550,000		1,025,000			
Asset Modernisation Programme	FIN & CORP	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000			
ATC East Wing Boiler Replacement	FIN & CORP	160,000			62,000		98,000	
Mitigation Schemes	PLAN & ECON	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000				1,000,000
Infrastructure Projects	PLAN & ECON	1,000,000						1,000,000
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME		16,579,000	15,497,000	6,719,000	9,466,000	1,500,000	3,613,000	2,000,000
								16,579,000
LOAN FINANCED					Vehicles & Plant	-4,012,000		
RESIDUAL NFDC RESOURCES						5,454,000		

CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. That the Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the Capital Strategy 2024/25 be approved, including the adoption of the MRP statement.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Capital Strategy is a high-level document, giving an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management come together, with an overview of current activities and the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 2.2. By producing this strategy report, the Council is following statutory guidance issued by the Government in January 2018.

3. OVERVIEW OF WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE CAPITAL STRATEGY

- 3.1. The Capital Strategy confirms at high level what the Council is intending to spend its money on over the medium term and how it intends to finance this expenditure. Over the period covered by 2024/25 to 2026/27, total capital expenditure is forecast at around £128 million.
- 3.2. As demonstrated throughout the report, the Council is initially intending to utilise the cash balances it has accrued to deliver the various adopted strategies, including the acquisition and development of Commercial Property, which aims to provide a sustainable and buoyant economy within the New Forest and present options for regeneration, Residential Property Ownership and additional Council owned Housing.
- 3.3. The Council will supplement internal resources, when necessary, with external borrowing and in accordance with advice it receives from its contracted Treasury Management experts. Based on the current set of prudential indicators, external borrowing will be required each year from 2023/24.
- 3.4. It is vitally important that the Council has regard to the relationship between the financing costs of the capital programme and the revenue General Fund, and Housing Revenue Account. This is covered within the report by the prudential indicators.
- 3.5. This Council has established a sound level of governance surrounding its capital investments and employs suitably qualified personnel in order to fulfil the objectives of the Strategy. External support and expertise is sought where necessary, and officers have the ability to communicate openly and freely with members of the Cabinet.

4. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION

- 4.1. Where General Fund capital spend has been financed by loan (including internal borrowing) and has increased the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), the Council is required to make a provision to repay a proportion of the accumulated amount each year. This amount is charged to revenue and is called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This charge reduces the CFR each year and is based on the expected economic use period related to the capital expenditure.

- 4.2. Full Council is required to approve an MRP statement in advance of each financial year. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP statement:

“For capital expenditure that has been incurred, and which has given rise to a CFR, the MRP policy for expenditure other than that incurred on investment property and dwellings, shall be to charge revenue an amount equal to the depreciation of any asset financed by loan. The MRP policy specific to investment properties and dwellings financed by loan, shall be to charge revenue an amount equivalent to the sum of borrowing utilised, over a repayment period of 50 years.”

5. ENVIRONMENTAL / CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no implications arising from this report.

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 18 January 2024 supported the Capital Strategy 2024/25 for approval.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 7.1 This gives a broad outline for the capital expenditure over the coming year, providing direction for the prudent use of resources and ensuring that any requirement for outside funding is maintained at an affordable level. I am pleased that the Council has managed to maintain its mandatory (as a result of government legislation) borrowing position for as long as it has, despite significant investment in property supporting the New Forest Economy and in new housing, to support the most vulnerable within our district. The Strategy supports a proportionate capital programme, and affordable costs of finance over the medium term.

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Background Papers:

Capital Strategy 2024/25

1.0 Introduction

This capital strategy gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.

The report also includes the prudential indicators, as required by the Prudential Code.

2.0 Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.

The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £10,000 are generally not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year.

In 2024/25, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £49.459 million as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
General Fund services	6.682	13.654	17.079	16.297	7.169
Council housing (HRA)	22.077	28.095	32.380	27.400	27.380
Capital investments	13.203	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.000
TOTAL	41.962	41.999	49.459	43.697	34.549

The General Fund capital programme includes the cyclical replacement of vehicles and plant, the new depot facility at Hardley and containers/vehicles for the new Waste Strategy. A couple of additional projects have been allowed for within the capital strategy, but are not included within the Capital programme at this time, as they are subject to further feasibility work and will require approval through specific business cases in due course. Due to the recent increase in interest rates, no further expenditure on commercial and residential properties is assumed at this time (save for exceptional opportunities).

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account which ensures that council housing does not subsidise, or is itself subsidised by, other local services. HRA capital expenditure is therefore recorded separately and includes the maintenance and decarbonisation of existing stock and the building and acquisition of new homes over the forecast period, in line with the Housing strategy.

Governance: Service managers bid annually in the early Autumn to include projects in the Council’s capital programme. Bids are collated by the Chief Finance Officer and reviewed collectively by the Executive Management Team. The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel appraises the proposed programme and makes recommendations to the Cabinet. The final capital programme is then presented to Cabinet and to Council in February each year.

- Full details of the Council’s capital programme are available within the Feb 2024 Cabinet papers (Medium Term Financial Plan / Annual Budget 2024/25)

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council’s own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
External sources (Grants / DC's)	4.543	10.469	15.620	10.998	7.391
Capital Receipts	3.977	3.000	3.381	2.000	2.000
Capital Reserves	3.640	5.474	6.666	2.444	2.555
Revenue Contributions	11.946	10.360	10.700	10.700	10.700
Debt / Loan	17.856	12.696	13.092	17.555	11.903
TOTAL	41.962	41.999	49.459	43.697	34.549

Prior to 2023/24 any borrowing required to meet the Council’s capital expenditure was met by using cash held in reserves rather than raising loans. This action is known as internal borrowing. Internal borrowing is replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP, explained further below). Alternatively, additional (beyond those already anticipated within the financing as shown within table 2) proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and debt repayment are as follows:

Table 3: Replacement of debt finance in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Capital Expenditure Financed by Debt / Loan	17.856	12.696	13.092	17.555	11.903
Own resources - Debt Repayment	-4.100	-2.749	-4.100	-4.100	-4.100
Own resources - MRP Provision	-1.615	-2.210	-2.746	-3.259	-3.798
Movement in CFR	12.141	7.737	6.246	10.196	4.005

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP, debt repayments and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £6.246 million during 2024/25. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
General Fund services	6.105	7.721	7.988	13.887	12.858
Council housing (HRA)	128.846	135.082	141.495	146.228	151.696
Capital investments	21.400	21.285	20.850	20.415	19.980
Total CFR at Year End	156.351	164.087	170.333	180.530	184.534
Movement in CFR from one year to the next	12.141	7.737	6.246	10.196	4.005

Minimum Revenue Provision: Where General Fund capital spend has been financed by loan (internal borrowing), and has increased the CFR, the Council is required to make a provision to repay a proportion of the accumulated amount each year. This amount is charged to revenue and is called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This charge reduces the CFR each year and is based on the expected economic use period related to the capital expenditure.

Full Council is required to approve an MRP statement in advance of each financial year. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP statement:

“For capital expenditure that has been incurred, and which has given rise to a CFR, the MRP policy for expenditure other than that incurred on investment property and dwellings, shall be to charge revenue an amount equal to the depreciation of any asset financed by loan. The MRP policy specific to investment properties and dwellings financed by loan, shall be to charge revenue an amount equivalent to the sum of borrowing utilised, over a repayment period of 50 years.”

For Council Housing and the refinancing settlement of 2012, the Council approved a business plan that charged amounts to revenue to ensure that any borrowings are reduced in accordance with the maturity of the debt outstanding. The proposed 2024/25 HRA budget confirms that new borrowing is required to provide the necessary finance to the Capital Programme.

Asset management: Service Managers from across the Council manage assets in their service delivery areas. The Council’s Service Manager for Estates and Valuation has overall responsibility for the management of the Council’s property estate records, including liaising with the Council’s Accountancy department on statutory annual financial reporting. To ensure that property assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council will be producing an overarching Accommodation Strategy.

Asset disposals: When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds (capital receipts), can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. Council dwelling sales through the Right to Buy scheme also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive £2.3 million of capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Asset sales	4.293	2.400	2.000	2.000	2.000
Loans repaid	0.451	0.301	0.300	0.000	0.000
TOTAL	4.744	2.701	2.300	2.000	2.000

- The majority of forecast asset disposals relate to Right to Buy receipts.
- In 2014, the Council arranged £2m of prudential borrowing on behalf Lymington Harbour Commissioner. This is being repaid annually, with the final payment in 2023/24.
- In 2022/23, the Council provided a loan facility to the New Forest Enterprise Centre to finance planned maintenance works. The outstanding loan value at the end of 2023/24 is expected to be £300,000, with full repayment due by 31/3/2025.

3.0 Treasury Management

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council’s spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent¹ but will become cash poor in

¹ ‘spent’ in this context also includes the payment of collected council tax to the relevant precepting authorities

the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

At the last balance sheet date (31/03/23), the Council had £118.3 million borrowing at an average interest rate of 3.32% (due principally to the HRA refinancing settlement in 2012) and held £31.50 million treasury investments (including sums received from Central government for redistribution) earning an average rate of 3.77%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council’s main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheaper short-term loans and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher.

The Council does not borrow to invest for the primary purpose of financial return and therefore retains full access to the Public Works Loans Board.

Projected levels of the Council’s total outstanding debt are shown in table 6 below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £millions

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
Debt - HRA Settlement	118.1	114.0	109.9	105.8	101.7
Debt - Capital Programme	0.2	7.4	25.1	41.5	52.2
Total Debt	118.3	121.4	135.0	147.3	153.9
Capital Financing Requirement	156.4	164.1	170.3	180.5	184.5

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 6, the Council expects to comply with this for the duration of the current programme.

The figures shown in the Debt – Capital Programme row highlight the amount of external borrowing that is anticipated to be needed from 31 March 2024, but this will be managed against actual overall cash balances, as part of the Treasury Strategy.

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 7: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £millions

	2022/23 limit	2023/24 limit	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit	2026/27 limit
Authorised limit – total external debt	202.9	229.9	230.5	231.1	231.8
Operational boundary – total external debt	185.1	211.5	211.5	211.5	211.5

- Further details on borrowing are included within the treasury management strategy.

Investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 8: Treasury management investments in £millions

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
Near-term investments	17.9	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0
Longer-term investments	13.6	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
TOTAL	31.5	10.1	10.1	10.0	10.0

- Further details on treasury investments are included within the treasury management strategy

Table 8 highlights that the majority of the Council's cash will be utilised over the period through internal borrowing to fund the needs of the Council's capital programme, until minimum balances reach £10 million. Use of cash for capital programme financing will then be supplemented through external borrowing, when required. The Council should expect to retain a minimum level of cash, known as the **Liability Benchmark**. The General Fund balance reserve at £3 million and the HRA reserve at £1 million are an absolute minimum, with further headroom added to set where the Council's basic benchmark should be (**£10 million** in total).

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Head of Finance and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. A mid-year and an outturn report on treasury management activity are presented to the audit committee. The audit committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

4.0 Commercial Activities for the Purpose of Economic Sustainability, Regeneration and Income

The Council has invested in commercial and residential property to support a sustainable local economy within the New Forest and encourage regeneration projects. The Council will invest in and will lend to its Wholly Owned Trading Company and will in return receive an income. Investment properties were valued at £30.7 million on the Council's balance sheet as at 31/03/23 and long terms loans to the WOC totalled £3.713 million as at the same date.

To support the wider objective of economic sustainability and regeneration the Council accepts higher risk on commercial and residential investment than with treasury investments. The principal risk exposures include vacancies and falls in capital values. These risks in relation to commercial property are managed by predominantly targeting acquisitions with existing medium-long term tenancies in place and being sensible about the purchase price in relation to the Council's desire to promote and sustain employment sites within the district, and the income yields achievable. In order that commercial investments remain proportionate to the size of the authority, these are currently subject to an overall maximum investment limit of £50 million. Residential property investments are currently subject to an overall investment limit of £10 million.

Expenditure on these approved strategies is currently paused due to the increased interest return that can currently be received on cash balances, and as the Council is now in an external borrowing position, the interest charges are currently too high to satisfy the financial parameters of the business case requirements.

Governance: Decisions on commercial investments are made by an investment panel in line with the criteria and limits approved by Council in the Commercial Property Investment strategy. Decisions on residential investments are taken by the Board of Directors of the wholly owned company, in line with the criteria and limits approved by Council in the Residential Property Strategy. Property and most other commercial investments are also capital expenditure and purchases have therefore also been pre-approved as part of the capital programme.

- Further details, including the risk management on commercial and residential investments are outlined in these respective strategy documents;
 - [Commercial Property Investment Strategy - 2022](#)
 - [Residential Property Investment Strategy](#)

5.0 Other Liabilities

In addition to debt of £118.3 million detailed above, the Council is committed to making future payments to cover its pension fund liability (valued at £21 million as at 31/03/23), It has also set aside £4.5 million in provisions, with £4 million of this to cover risks of business rate appeals.

Governance: Decisions on incurring new discretionary liabilities are taken by the Chief Finance Officer. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by Accountancy and reported when necessary.

- Further details on liabilities are shown within the Council's draft balance sheet on page 18 of the 2022/23 draft Annual Financial Report, further supported by notes to the accounts:
 - [Annual Financial Report - 2022-23](#)

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable². The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants for the General fund, and the income receivable from rents within the HRA.

Table 9: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
General Fund; Financing costs (£m)	0.31	0.31	0.85	1.63	2.12
General Fund; Proportion of net revenue stream	1.5%	1.4%	3.6%	7.0%	9.6%
HRA; Financing costs (£m)	4.2	4.1	4.9	5.6	6.4
HRA; Proportion of net revenue stream	13.8%	12.4%	13.6%	15.4%	17.2%

The Financing costs of both the General Fund and HRA are set to increase as a result of the required Capital Financing Requirement, reducing cash balances (and assumed interest rates) for investment and costs of external borrowing. Financing costs for the General Fund will increase from 23/24 to 24/25 principally as a result of increased prices of Vehicles and Plant, the application of MRP to the new Platinum Jubilee Business Park and the allowance for borrowing charges as a result of the Capital Financing Requirement. The further increase to 31/3/27 is principally down to expected reductions in treasury management earnings and the capital expenditure requirements associated with the roll out of the new waste strategy, and the MRP / financing thereof. There is a working assumption that

² In relation to the finance costs incurred within the General Fund, the income to be generated from Commercial and Residential property will exceed the additional MRP and interest charges, but as this income is to be used to directly contribute towards the funding of services, the income is not netted off against the finance costs within the table 9.

reduced service costs, as a result of the collection methodology change will counter this increase, and that the additional revenue costs associated with regards to Food Waste collection will be supported with government funding.

Financial Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Chief Finance Officer is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is appropriate according to required projects aligned to service delivery. The medium-long term affordability remains reliant on service change savings being delivered, and government transitional support (with regards to the waste strategy roll-out & the large decarbonisation requirements within the HRA).

6.0 Knowledge and Skills

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Chief Finance Officer, the Finance Service Manager and the Council's Principal Corporate Accountant are all qualified accountants with several years' experience between them. The Service Manager for Estates, Valuation & Facilities is highly experienced in commercial property transactions and facilities management and is supported by experienced and professionally qualified surveyors and valuers (members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors).

Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers and has a Service Level Agreement with Hampshire County Council's Treasury Management department for day-to-day treasury management activities. The Council instructs external surveyors, valuers, architects and quantity surveyors to provide specialist advice on specific projects, where required. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

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COMMUNITY GRANTS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Cabinet recommend that Council approve:

- a) Community Grant awards, totalling £130,000 in revenue grants and £96,040 in capital grants, as set out in Appendix 1, and in more detail in Appendix 2, be approved for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2024/25.
- b) The proposed recommendations as set out in section 4.2
- c) The Community Transport grants totalling £51,100, as set out in section 5.5 along with the recommendation to respond to the HCC consultation, as detailed in 5.7.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following previous encouragement to promote the community grants, the Task and Finish Group were pleased to see many applications from new organisations, supporting a range of groups and that covered the whole district.
- 2.2 On 27, 28, 29 and 30 November 2023 the Community Grants Task and Finish Group met to consider the Revenue Community Grant applications received for the 2024/25 financial year. We received 43 applications from a range of organisations, including many new organisations. Due to the number of Revenue Grant applications, the Task and Finish Group met on 15 December 2023. We received 15 Capital Community Grants applications.
- 2.3 The value of Revenue grant applications totalled £617,199, (£249,430 in 2022) and Capital grant applications totalled £243,640 (£161,400 in 2022).
- 2.4 The recommended Revenue Community Grant amount includes £35,000 awarded to Community First Wessex as part of a two-year funding agreement which ends on 31 March 2025. Quarterly meetings are held to provide updates on activities undertaken as detailed in the agreement.
- 2.5 Due to the number and value of applications the Group sought to prioritise those that support our most vulnerable residents and communities and provided the most community benefit.
- 2.6 Applicants each gave a presentation to the Task & Finish Group and answered questions. The Task and Finish Group comprised Cllrs, Alvey (Chairman), Armstrong, Crisell, Dowd, Dunning (Vice Chairman), McCarthy and O'Sullivan, with input from key Council Officers.

3. PROCESS

- 3.1 Applications were reviewed by Officers, with clarification sought where there were queries with the application, for example the amount applied for, the organisations

status or the type of project seeking funding. Following the review some applications did not progress and were notified accordingly.

- 3.2 All Community Grant applicants were asked to present to the Task and Finish Group and provide details of their accounts, and how their application would meet the needs of, and benefit or support, residents in the district. Applicants were also asked to explain how their funding request linked to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and their outcomes and key deliverables.
- 3.3 Following the presentations, the Task and Finish Group thoroughly discussed and reviewed the information submitted with the applications and presented at interview and responses to the Groups specific questions. In formulating a recommendation for each grant request, members considered the agreed criteria, the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, the value for money being offered, or if supported us in delivering our services. Due to the number and value of applications the Group had to make difficult decisions and in a number of instances the Group recommended grants of less than the amount being requested so as to support as many groups as possible and to recognise the benefits of the individual grant applications. Consideration was also given to sustaining organisations over expansions.
- 3.4 The recommendations, with reasons, of each of the grant requests, are summarised in **Appendix 1** and in further detail in **Appendix 2**. Some applicants, where a grant is not recommended, have been given advice and information to support their organisation, including alternative funding streams, details of other organisations that can offer support, such as Community First Wessex, and invitations to join the New Forest partnership meetings where they can network and understand what other organisations are doing across the district.

4. REVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- 4.1 After completing the interviews, the Task and Group reviewed the overall grants process. Whilst acknowledging the considerable administration and time involved, especially this year due to the increased number of applicants, the Group were very supportive of the Community Grants programme which supports the Council's aims and objectives. However, with the increased number of applications, which is likely to increase further in the future as the need for funding is great, it does mean that a significant amount of officers' time is spent on the scheme administration, including responding to enquiries, arranging appointments, five days' worth of meetings and listening to applicants and subsequent report writing and ongoing administration.
- 4.2 On reviewing the Community Grants process the Task and Finish Group recommend:
 - a) For applications for the 2025/26 year, that the minimum revenue grant application amount be increased from £1,000 to £3,000 and that a maximum revenue grant award is set at £20,000
 - b) That any unspent Councillor Engagement Grant at year end is transferred to the Revenue Community Grant budget
 - c) That the Capital Grant scheme is reviewed to consider aligning with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding

- d) That the Revenue Grant scheme is fully reviewed to consider whether alternative processes could be used to simplify administration, and to ensure awards match the Council's emerging Corporate Plan priorities.

5. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANTS

5.1 The Task and Finish Group also considered community transport grants. There are 3 Service Level Agreements with Hampshire County Council for transportation projects all funded from the overall budget for Community Grants. Community First Wessex administer the three schemes.

- Wheels to work – This is a moped loan service which aims to help people between 16 and 25 with no access to suitable transport get to work, apprenticeships, training, or job interviews.

Current NFDC grant funding is £7,396.21 match funded by HCC. The contract is being extended for a further year so that it now ends on 31 March 2025.

- Call and Go – This is a bookable community transport service for anyone whose transport needs are not met by public bus services to go, for example, shopping, to visit a library or to see family and friends. Drivers will assist with carrying shopping and wheelchair accessible minibuses collect users from their home at a pre-arranged time. The cost will vary according to the distance travelled.

Current NFDC funding is £28,675.21 match funded by HCC. The contract is being extended for a further year so that it now ends on 31 March 2025.

- Group Hire – This scheme provides affordable wheelchair accessible minibuses to hire for voluntary or charitable organisations for a period of 3 hours to 1 week. The cost of hire depends on the distance travelled and duration of hire period.

Current NFDC grant funding is £13,671.32 match funded by HCC. The contract is being extended for a further year so that it now ends on 31 March 2025.

5.2 The total current funding for the three community transport schemes is £49,742.74.

5.3 Following an HCC review and subsequent consultation due to the need to reduce budgets, the savings programme to 2023 (SP23) was agreed by HCC Cabinet in October 2021. HCC will be undertaking a review of the Community Transport Schemes, as part of their wider budgetary review, with a decision expected to be made in July 2024 on their future.

5.4 The Group reviewed the numbers using the three schemes, which are recovering following the pandemic, and the impact of the options on service provision.

5.5 The Group was of the view that NFDC should maintain the same level of funding to support our communities, especially those in rural areas with limited transport links. Therefore, The Group recommend the following:

- Funding for Call & Go for 2024/25 to be £29,409.99
- Funding for Group Hire for 2024/25 to be £14,080.04
- Funding for Wheels to Work for 2024/25 to be £7,609.87

5.6 The recommended support funding is within the annual budget available.

5.7 The Group were very supportive of the schemes and written confirmation will be sent to HCC through their current public Future Services consultation to confirm our commitment and support to these schemes and encouragement for their funding to continue beyond 31 March 2025. On HCC making their decision we will give due consideration and discuss and agree our response, however, we will not be in a position to fund any HCC reductions in grant funding.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Task and Finish Group were advised that the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan had allowed for up to £130,000 to be awarded on Revenue Grants and up to £100,000 for Capital Grants.

6.2 The proposals, as set out in Appendix 1, total £130,000 of Revenue grants (£129,600 in 2023/24), which includes the £35,000 grant to Community First Wessex, and £96,040 for Capital grants (£92,000 in 2023/24).

6.3 The proposed budget for 2024/25 for the Community Transport Service Level Agreements, as outlined in section 5 of this report, is £51,100.

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS / DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Community Grants have been awarded to support groups with capital projects to become more energy efficient.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Our Community Grants programme continues to support a wide range of organisations across the district that support, engage and benefit our diverse communities and residents, including those with mental health and disabilities, and vulnerable households.

9. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

9.1 The Panel considered the Community Grants report and expressed their support to the proposed recommendations for Cabinet approval. It was recognised that a large number of organisations had applied for funding, and that the total value of capital and revenue applications far exceeded the budget allocation. Members recognised that there were a number of worthwhile organisations which had not been recommended to receive any funding and questioned whether it would be possible to consider an increase to the level of funding available to support such organisations in future years. Members noted that a review would be carried out of the Community Grant scheme and that this would align with the Corporate Plan priorities.

9.2 The Panel thanked members of the Task and Finish Group and officers for the work which had been involved in considering the grant applications and forming recommendations.

10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

10.1 The Council is committed to continually supporting our annual Community Grants programme and the valued contributions this has to our communities. Decisions were particularly difficult, due to the increased number and value of applications received, and I am very pleased at the wide range of the grants awarded that will benefit our communities and support the emerging priorities of the Council. The grants cover all areas of the New Forest and include grants that promote and support physical and social activity and sports, arts and culture, and to local charities and organisations that support our communities and our most vulnerable residents, for example mental health. Considering the administration involved and the expected increase in demand, it is right we review the community grants scheme.

10.2 We are also continuing our support to the three Community Transport schemes, which benefit many of our residents, and we will respond to Hampshire County Council's consultation to confirm our support of their continuation beyond 31 March 2025.

Further information:

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Service Manager – Revenue, Benefits and
Customer services
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Background Papers:

Community Grants Appendix 1 and 2

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A. REVENUE GRANTS

ITEM	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMENDATION	2023/24 AWARD
1	Applemore Waterside Swimming Club	2,000	0	N/A
2	Aquaponics	28,000	0	N/A
3	Avon Valley Community	25,000	0	N/A
4	Avon Valley Shed	6,200	0	N/A
5	Eling Tidemill Experience	25,000	0	N/A
6	Families Matter	5,000	5,000	N/A
7	Flutterby Fund	5,000	0	N/A
8	Forest Forge	15,000	7,000	10,000
9	Hammersley Homes	15,000	4,000	5,000
10	Hampshire Cultural Trust (Forest Arts)	15,000	7,500	10,000
11	Headway	12,000	0	N/A
12	Helping Older people	35,000	0	N/A
13	HoneyPot Childrens Charity	10,000	5,000	N/A
14	Living After Loss	30,000	0	N/A
15	Lyndhurst and District Community Association	30,000	0	N/A
16	Marchwood Men's Shed	1,200	0	0
17	Memory Box	3,500	0	N/A
18	New Forest Baseball	5,000	0	N/A
19	New Forest Basics Bank	20,000	5,000	N/A
20	New Forest Bike Project	10,000	1,000	2,000
21	New Forest Cricket Association	5,000	0	N/A
22	New Forest Disability Info Services	28,500	17,000	18,500
23	New Forest Heritage Trust	10,000	0	0
24	New Forest Mencap	10,000	5,000	N/A
25	New Forest Pride	5,000	0	0
26	Parkinson UK	2,500	1,000	N/A
27	PEDALL	10,000	0	N/A
28	Positive Path	15,000	5,000	N/A
29	Ringwood Veterans Club	5,484	0	N/A
30	Solent Mind	24,000	0	N/A
31	SPUD	15,000	5,000	10,000
32	St Barbe	12,000	5,000	10,000
33	St Wins Church	18,733	0	N/A
34	Stepping Stones Pre School	12,000	0	N/A
35	The Crossings	10,000	8,000	5,000
36	The Green Gram	24,720	0	0
37	The Handy Trust	8,000	5,000	7,000
38	Totton and Eling Community Association	26,362	0	N/A
39	Totton Sharks Basketball Club	1,000	0	N/A
40	Wessex Cancer Trust	21,000	0	N/A
41	WetWheels	10,000	0	N/A
42	Woodlands Pre School	35,000	0	N/A
43	Youth and Families Matter	10,000	9,500	10,000
Total		£617,199	£95,000	
	Community First Wessex - SLA		35,000	35,000
Total			£130,000	

B. CAPITAL GRANTS

ITEM	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMENDATION
1	Boldre Parish Council	18,500	9,000
2	Brockenhurst Cricket Club	40,000	0
3	Burley Cricket Club	1,600	2,000
4	Fawley Parish Council	15,000	15,000
5	Fordingbridge Town Council	25,000	0
6	Foxies Future	20,000	10,000
7	Lymington Community Association	26,000	7,500
8	Lymington Cricket Club	1,500	1,000
9	Lyndhurst Drama and Music Society	25,000	15,000
10	Lyndhurst Drama and Music Society	5,500	2,500
11	Ringwood Community Association	10,615	10,615
12	Ringwood Round Table	5,915	5,915
13	Sway Cricket Club	15,000	7,500
14	Sway Parish Council	10,000	10,000
15	Totton Town Council	24,000	0
Total		£243,640	£96,040

A. REVENUE GRANTS**APPENDIX 2**

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Applemore Waterside Swimming Club	The club, which has been running for 40 years, provides swimming lessons via qualified instructors, with a current membership of 130

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£ 2,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the club but since the application the club have improved their financial stability. It was considered that alternative funding sources could be explored, including Councillor Community Engagement grants. Although the Group support the promotion of physical activity, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

2	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Aquaponics	New Forest Aquaponics CIC is the UK's first regenerative aquaponics farm. Aquaponics is a nutrient-rich, chemical-free way of 'companion farming' in a system of interconnected tanks where fish and plants grow and nurture each other, providing healthy food in a regenerative and waste-free way. They also support the community with clothes swap, a repair café, and distribute food waste from supermarkets.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£28,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the work of Aquaponics, which is a new organisation, but had concerns over their focus and undertaking several activities, some of which may be being done elsewhere by other organisations, and that limited fundraising had been applied for and obtained.

3	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Avon Valley Partnership Youth & Community Trust	Avon Valley Partnership is based in a charity shop in Fordingbridge and is an outreach arm of Avon Valley churches with the aim of supporting the local community.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£25,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group acknowledged the work of the Avon Valley Partnership, but the grant requested was to employ someone for two years which the Group could not commit to, and there are organisations in the locality providing similar activities. Therefore, when considering the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, the Group considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

4	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Avon Valley Shed	The Avon Valley Shed brings people together in a social setting, to improve mental health, reduce isolation, give a sense of purpose, and to educate and share skills. The Group has 40 members, being open to all, with member involvement on running activities. The Group is a member of UK Association of Men's Shed and is applying for charitable status.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£6,200

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of Avon Valley Shed but considered that more could be done to generate funding, including seeking donations from work undertaken and Councillor Community Engagement grants. Therefore, when considering the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, the Group considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

5	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Eling Tide Mill Experience	Eling Tide Mill is a water mill with visitor centre and activity room with plans to employ a Community Worker to engage with residents from a hub setting.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£25,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group considered that the Town Council could provide financial support to the project, and had concerns about longer term funding for the project, and that there was already similar provision already in Totton.

6	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Families Matter	Families Matter is a small local charity based in Hythe which helps families in need in the Waterside area. They support parents through parenting classes and groups for parents and children with special

		needs, autism and mental health, and through a crisis, i.e. separation, domestic violence, behavioural problems. They work closely with local schools, supporting children and also run groups for people with dementia and their carers and for families with drug and/or alcohol addictions.
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Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£5,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The organisation contributes to the Council's priorities through assisting wellbeing of those in the District, working with vulnerable children and young people and parents. Families Matter work in partnership with other organisations, run parenting courses to those families struggling with their child's extreme angry behaviour, support elderly people with dementia, and their carers, with monthly groups. With an increasing demand, the grant would be used to continue this work in the context of general grant reduction from other organisations.

7	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Flutterby Fund	Based in Cadnam, Flutterby Fund provide equine therapy to children with special needs aged between 0 to 18.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£5,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the benefits of equine therapy but considered that although the grant would support 10 children with therapy sessions this was a relatively small number of beneficiaries compared to other applications when considering the grant amount requested, and that more could be done to generate income. Therefore, when considering the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, the Group considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

8	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Forest Forge Theatre Company	Forest Forge is theatre that provides creative learning and outreach activities and tours to communities and schools across the New Forest with an emphasis on creative learning and using theatre to tackle wider social issues such as bullying and mental health. The organisation encourages participation in a variety of activities such as workshops; work experience and targeted outreach projects (e.g., teenagers).

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£30,000	£10,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £7,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Forest Forge provides creative learning activities across the district and contributes to community cohesion and wellbeing. It supports local business and provides experience for young people's employability and seeks to be fully inclusive by engaging with all communities. It works in schools, tours a production about mental health, has set-up a youth theatre with over 100 attending and a trans youth theatre.

9	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Hammersley Homes	Hammersley Homes apply a person centred approach to provide emotional and practical support for people with mental health and aims to provide supported living accommodation for vulnerable adults so that they can live independently. They provide an outreach programme and aim to keep people out of hospital by providing support in their own home.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£20,000	£5,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group supported Hammersley Homes ambitions and aims and the importance of the work they do with supporting vulnerable people, focusing on those with mental illness and their families, and that the funding will enable them to increase their programme to support more people as demand is expected to increase.

10	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Hampshire Cultural Trust (Forest Arts Centre)	Forest Arts Centre is part of FOLIO, a collaboration of arts and heritage organisations, and provides a leading venue for quality live music, comedy, theatre, arts, activities, and events based in New Milton and has an extensive outreach programme. The Centre's priorities include providing high quality cultural programming and community benefit and targets working with schools, including Greenwood, adults with learning disabilities, and older people with dementia or Parkinson's disease.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£15,000	£10,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £7,500 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Forest Arts contributes to the Council's priorities by helping local business grow by supporting artists and attracting visitors to the area, and service outcomes for the community with events, activities, and projects. The venue also seeks to provide accessible and affordable space for hire, e.g., Hampshire Autism, host activities and events, offering opportunities to showcase

artistic output at affordable process. Forest Arts seeks to improve mental and physical wellbeing, for example Dance for Parkinson's, and seeks to develop outreach work, as well as a LGBTQ+ youth drop-in. The grant is ring-fenced to the Centre and the work in the district, ensuring our residents benefit, and the Group recommended exploring business sponsorship to increase fundraising income.

11	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Headway	Headway are based in Totton and support people and their families affected by brain injuries

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£12,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the work Headway do but considered that they are currently well funded and that the NHS should be providing support. Therefore, when considering the number of grant applications received, the Group considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

12	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Helping Older People	Helping Older People provide free support, advice and befriending services as well as running two charity shops.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£35,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The application was to expand service provision, and although the Group acknowledge their work, with limited funding available priority is given to sustaining organisations. The Group considered that therefore, when considering the number of grant applications received, the Group considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

13	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Honeypot Childrens Charity	Honeypot Childrens Charity support young carers aged between 5 and 12, including offering respite breaks at their home

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of Honeypot and their plans to reach out to more young carers, a cohort who have very limited support available from other sources.

14	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Living After Loss	Living After Loss provide counselling sessions to those affected by a bereavement and are seeking a permanent location for drop-in sessions.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£30,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group were supportive of the application, it was considered that an application to secure a permanent building space could be resolved with partnership working with other organisations.

15	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Lyndhurst and District Community Association	Lyndhurst and District Community Centre has halls, meeting rooms and a charity shop that serve the local community and plan on recruiting a Centre Manager to manage the hall and generate income.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£30,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group recognise the value of community buildings, it considered that funding a centre manager was not a priority, when considering other grant applicants, and that the position could be self-financing with initial support from other organisations.

16	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Marchwood Men's Shed	The Men's Shed has recently formed with the purpose being to bring people together in a social setting, to improve mental health, reduce isolation, give a sense of purpose, and to educate and share skills. The Group has 20 members, being open to all, with member involvement on running activities. It intends to make links with the community, already undertaking a bird box and planter project. The Group is a member of UK Association of Men's Shed and is applying for charitable status.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£1,2000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group fully supported the project, and recognise its benefits, it was considered the group could do more to be self-sustaining, for example membership fees like other Men's Sheds, and apply for alternative grant funding. When considering this, and the membership numbers, the Group did not consider a grant appropriate when considering other priorities.

17	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Memory Box	Memory Box are based in Southampton and aim to combat loneliness and social isolation for those aged 50 plus, working in Ringwood and Fordingbridge libraries, through their "Memories, me and tea" project.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£3,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

18	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Baseball	New Forest Baseball are a club seeking to promote and expand participation of baseball in the area, including having their own maintained pitch

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£5,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the promotion of physical activity, it considered that the group could seek alternative funding and sponsorship, and with the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, it considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

19	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Basics Bank	New Forest Basics Bank operate a Food Bank from Lymington which supports the surrounding areas, including schools and community hubs.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£20,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the support given to vulnerable families, especially with the cost of living, and the work New Forest Basics Bank do with schools and supporting the Food Larders, along with the reduction in donations and increasing demand resulting in having to purchase items.

20	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Bike Project	New Forest Bike Project (NFBP) is a Not for profit Community Interest Company and re-cycles bikes and sells them at reduced rates, benefiting residents by offering an affordable source of bikes and parts, especially to those on a low income, to keep people on the road, fit and healthy, reducing the need for car journeys and the impact on the environment. It provides opportunities and a place to help those with issues in their lives improve their confidence, self-esteem, practical and social skills.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Current request
£5,000	£2,000	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £1,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group support the work of this project, especially as part of the greener agenda and to encourage recycling and cycling, providing more affordable access to bicycles for households struggling with the cost of transport, as well as providing volunteering opportunities and training.

21	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Cricket Association	New Forest Cricket Association support the local village and town cricket teams, who are members, and runs competitions and promotes the game.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£5,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the promotion of physical activity, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

22	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Disability Information Service	New Forest Disability Information Service (NFDIS) provides specialised, free, impartial, and confidential disability related information, advice, and guidance to anyone with a disability who lives or works within the New Forest area. NFDIS are the only organisation within the New

		Forest that support and represent the most vulnerable disabled clients at welfare benefit tribunals. NFDIS specialise in providing mobility aids and equipment, and collaborate with community and other organisations to help people maximise their wellbeing and live safely and as independently as possible in their own home.
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Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£18,500	£18,500	£28,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £17,000 be given

REASON FOR DECISION:

NFDIS is the only organisation of its kind in the district and provides an essential service to the vulnerable in the face of ever-increasing demand and supports the council in many ways, including with the Just Got Home, working from Lymington and Fordingbridge hospital, and Independence Matters projects. The Group acknowledged the great work of NFDIS in supporting vulnerable and disabled residents.

23	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Heritage Centre	The free entry New Forest Heritage Centre is the only museum dedicated to the social and natural history of the New Forest. Their aim is to inspire visitors to explore and value the New Forest by collecting, conserving, and interpreting collections and by providing educational activities and information to children, young people and adults visiting the Forest and living in the community. The Centre includes an accredited Museum, Reference Library, which preserves historical artefacts, shop, and Exhibition Gallery.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£5,000	£0	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group took into consideration the work of the Heritage Trust, but considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
24	New Forest Mencap	New Forest Mencap support residents with disabilities, including through sessions, and their families, and operate a charity shop.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the work Mencap do to support those with learning disabilities and the work with partner organisations.

25	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Pride	New Forest Pride (NFP) is a registered charity which supports the LGBTQ+ community. NFP aim to host another free event in Lymington, with an estimate of between 5,000 and 6,000 attending, after the first Pride festival which took place there in 2023.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Current request
£1,500	£0	£1,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Whilst the Group supported the aims of NFP, it considered that funding for one-off events are not within the scope of the Community Grants. The Group wished NFP well for the event and stated that the Council is keen to work with the group on future projects and provide information on other grants available.

26	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Parkinson's UK New Forest Branch	Parkinson's UK New Forest Branch support those living with Parkinson's and their families, and host coffee mornings and meetings, seminars and events.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£2,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £1,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the tailored and specialist work Parkinson's UK New Forest do across the district to support those affected by Parkinson's

27	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	PEDALL	PEDALL provide inclusive cycling opportunities for all ages and abilities and needs

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the promotion of physical activity, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

28	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Positive Path	Positive Path provides mentoring, support and advice to people with mental health issues

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group acknowledged the hard work of Positive Path and the impact it has on the lives of people that it has supported, along with the work with partner organisations to maximise the benefits with their limited resources.

29	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Ringwood Veterans Club	Ringwood Veteran Club support veterans with a group meetings to provide a social environment to reduce isolation

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£5,484

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the group, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

30	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Solent Mind	Solent Mind is an independent charity covering Hampshire providing help, support, advice and information to those with mental health issues, and works with partner organisations.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£24,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group were supportive of the work Solent Mind does to help those suffering with mental health, it considered that this work should be funded by alternative means through the National Health Service or Public Health.

31	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	SPUD	SPUD is an arts and education charity that creates opportunities for people to creatively engage with art, architecture, design, and the environment. SPUD supports people works with and support various groups including, youth, disabled, autism, LGBTQ+ and dementia.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£15,000	£10,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group support the work SPUD does with vulnerable groups, which aligns closely with the 'Culture in Common' programme that the Council is involved in delivering across the district. SPUD's work with residents with dementia and with young people to support their mental wellbeing was noted, as was their outreach programme that builds on the community partnerships. The Group supports the work SPUD does, acknowledging the increase in utility costs, and was impressed with the impact of SPUD. With limited funding, the Group unfortunately could not support the full grant request.

32	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery	St Barbe is a museum and art gallery providing a cultural hub and educational facilities on the heritage, culture, history, and character of the New Forest. It is part of FOLIO, and provides learning services for schools and interest groups, including workshops, exhibitions, and curriculum-based activities. St Barbe also has a coffee shop which is used to support groups, e.g., an Elderly Programme for "memories" and works with low-income families, e.g. holiday workshops and activities and Food programme and outreach work.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£16,000	£10,000	£12,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £10,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

St Barbe supports NFDC priorities through assisting with the wellbeing of those in the district, as well as attracting visitors. St Barbe provide a wide range of activities, for all ages, and is a vibrant community hub, working with schools, disabled groups, those suffering with dementia or autism, holiday programmes, and a Young Curator group, as well as working with apprentices as part of the government Kickstart programme. The Group were very supportive of the outreach programmes and the summer camps for children eligible for free school meals. Whilst the Group

fully supported its work, regrettably pressures and limitations on budgets meant that it was not able to recommend meeting the grant request in full.

33	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	St Wins Church	St Wins Church is based in Totton and runs various community projects from the church, including Tots and Toddlers group, café and warm space and youth group.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£18,733

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the work of the church, it considered as the application was not separated from church and any grant would be used to support church activities and aims it was not within scope of the grants scheme.

34	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Stepping Stones Pre-school	Stepping Stones pre-school is a pre-school based in Fordingbridge for 2 to 5 years olds.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£12,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group acknowledge the importance of pre-schools it did not consider that subsidising a lack of government funding was within the community grants scheme.

35	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Crossings	The Crossings offer support and help to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness and marginalised in the Waterside area. They operate three drop-in centres which provide a welcoming, non-judgemental space in which people can feel safe to discuss their current issues, which can be multiple and complex. The Crossings support people to make Homesearch, Universal Credit or other benefits applications, some of whom struggle with literacy or numeracy, or they are digitally excluded, and provide signposting advice and information.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Current request
£15,000	£5,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the valuable work done to support vulnerable people and the joined up working with our Homelessness Teams where there is joint attendance and collaboration at drop-ins. The grant will enable The Crossings to continue their drop-in and expand their home visits capacity. The longer-term plan is for The Crossings to expand beyond the Waterside and The Group fully support this.

36	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Green Gram	The Green Gram is a community refill shop in Fordingbridge which enables residents to purchase everyday food and household supplies without single use packaging and reusing their own containers. The Green Gram aim to reduce food waste, increase recycling and reducing the environmental impact.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£24,720

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the Green Gram's vision and environmental impact but did not feel able to support the application and this was for a two year post which could not be committed too.

37	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Handy Trust	The Handy Trust provides full youth support services to children and young people aged up to 25. They work in the Waterside area offering a 24/7 service at home, in schools, providing drop-ins and advice and support on relationship, sex and drug issues, as well as in the community with supporting families, and provide holiday clubs and run youth clubs.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Current request
£7,000	£7,000	£8,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the value of the grant and the huge work and outcomes achieved by The Handy Trust in supporting young people, families and support to those in crisis.

38	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Totton and Eling Community Association	Totton and Eling Community Association rent a building from Totton Town Council to provide space for services and groups to meet

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£26,362

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the promotion of activities at the community centre, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

39	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Totton Sharks Basketball Club	Totton Sharks Basketball club provide opportunities for juniors and adults to play basketball

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£1,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the promotion of physical activity, it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

40	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Wessex Cancer Trust	Wessex Cancer Trust provide emotional support to people, and their families, affected by cancer, including counselling, therapy, support groups and a befriending service.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£21,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were not presented with financial information relating to the New Forest and the application was to expand existing service provision. Although the Group support their work it considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, and considered that at this time. priority is given to sustaining organisations.

41	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Wetwheels	Wetwheels are based in Hamble and provide boating experiences for people with disabilities

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
£N/A	£N/A	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group were supportive of Wetwheels, it is not fully established in the district and needs to develop this further before considering a grant. The Group considered the limited funding available, the number of grant applications received, often working directly with vulnerable groups, and considered that this is regrettably not a current priority at this time.

42	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Woodlands Pre School	Woodlands pre-school is a pre-school based in Netley Marsh.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
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£N/A	£N/A	£35,000
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RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group acknowledge the importance of pre-schools it did not consider that subsidising a lack of government funding was within the community grants scheme.

43	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Youth & Families Matter	Youth and Families Matter (YFM) is a small charity that works in Totton to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families whose lives are complex and impacted by many forms of disadvantage, mental illness, serious illness, addiction, or abuse.

Last Year's Request	Last Year's Award	Request
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£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
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RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £9,500 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

YFM met the Council's objectives by assisting in the wellbeing of local people and supporting families, through working with young people and vulnerable families at risk by a combination of support sessions and groups. YFM actively work with many partner organisations, run a foodbank supports the Food Larder, with 30-40 households being supported each week, as well as providing a warm space this winter and works with the Council as part of the Cost of Living Steering Group.

B. CAPITAL GRANTS

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Boldre Parish Council	To renovate the recreation ground and play area, providing facilities for all ages to a rural and surrounding community

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£18,000	£4,000	£18,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £9,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of regenerating the play area in a rural area with a range of equipment, which was done in consultation with local residents, where opportunities for recreation are limited.

2	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Brockenhurst Cricket Club	To build a new club pavilion which is accessible, safe, secure, sustainable, and fit for purpose for a growing club.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£175,000	£70,000	£40,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

Although the Group support the project, there were concerns as planning permission had not been granted and that the costings of the project needed further exploration. A future application is encouraged once these issues are resolved.

3	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Burley Cricket Club	To replace the existing nets which need replacing due to wear and tear and the unavailability of spare parts.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£3,200	£1,600	£1,600

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £2,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project and recommended a higher grant award to ensure better quality and more robust nets could be purchased to ensure a greater return on the investment given the unique challenges of playing on the open forest.

4	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Fawley Parish Council	To purchase new equipment of a Thera trainer to support people with their rehabilitation and to replace the existing lift to ensure compliance with safety standards.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£35,185	£20,185	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £15,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were complementary of the work done to ensure opportunities for disabled residents to be active and supportive of the provision of additional services and the lift replacement project to ensure the building could be used and accessible for all and to ensure wider community use.

5	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Fordingbridge Town Council	To create a 5km circular path to be used by a new Park Run and improve accessibility for residents.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£100,000	£75,000	£25,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant is given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of encouraging physical activity but concerns were raised that approval had not been confirmed from relevant governing bodies that changes to pitches and layout met standards and that no negative impacts will be incurred on the site.

6	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Foxies Future	To purchase the Girl Guiding activity centre at Foxlease to ensure it is retained for Girl Guides and other groups and organisations to use.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£3,134,000	£830,000	£20,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £10,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognised the value and benefit of the activity centre to the community and were encouraged by the plans for wider usage and funding secured to date. It was considered that a grant from the Council would demonstrate the Council's support for the facility and help leverage other grant funding.

7	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Lymington Community Association	To renew and renovate the café to include improving access, kitchen and bar facilities, a courtyard garden and the installation of solar panels.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£52,413	£26,413	£26,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £7,500 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group recognise the Lymington Community Centre is a community asset with wide and extensive community use of the building which would be enhanced by the project and the environmental benefits, which would also support the financial sustainability of the building.

8	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Lymington Cricket Club	To purchase a bowling machine for practice by club members.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£3,000	£1,000	£1,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £1,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project to support a vibrant club with their cricketing activities for all sections of the local community.

9 and 10	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Lyndhurst Drama and Musical Society	The project is twofold, firstly, to improve the existing changing facilities, toilets, kitchen, and bar and secondly to undertake electrical works to ensure safe and regulations met.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£61,000	£22,500	£25,000 and £5,500

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £15,000 and £2,500 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project to support a community building which would be used by more groups across the community and support further work and funding applications, such as Arts Council England.

11	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Ringwood Community Association	To replace the wooden flooring which is 60 years old which is damaged and unsafe

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£21,251	£10,636	£10,615

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £10,615 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project to support a community building which is used by many groups which benefits the local community.

12	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Ringwood Round Table	To build a new skate ramp in Poulner

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£11,830	£1,020	£5,915

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £5,915 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project to improve physical activity in the area which has been identified by the Town Council as lacking through consultation with local young people. The Group were impressed with the fundraising efforts to date and that consideration had been given to the impacts of the project and materials to be used.

13	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Sway Cricket Club	To replace the existing nets which need replacing due to wear and tear and the unavailability of spare parts with a permanent structure.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£30,000	£15,000	£15,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £7,500 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of the project which will enable promotion of junior cricket and promote physical activity.

14	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Sway Parish Council	To replace and improve the playground equipment which is over 20 years old to provide a bigger, safe, inclusive and more challenging facility for the community.

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£70,000	£60,000	£10,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That a grant of £10,000 be given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group were supportive of improving the playground to provide facilities for all ages, and which are accessible, safe and used by many local residents.

15	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Totton Town Council	To enhance the space available for community events

Total Cost	Other Funding	Request
£48,000	£6,000	£24,000

RECOMMENDATION:

That no grant is given.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Group considered that there are already venues within Totton and Eling which provide space for community events, which have access and are suitable and have capacity.

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LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That the Cabinet recommends that the Council agree to:

- (a) commence a full review of the adopted Local Plan, to include *Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy 2020* and policies saved from earlier local plans, and the preparation of a Design Code(s) for the Plan Area;
- (b) publish the updated *Local Development Scheme* work programme at appendix one, initially to cover financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26;
- (c) approve an initial Local Plan budget covering the next two financial years of £700,000, noting that £370,000 is currently allocated in a specific reserve, and that statutory increases in planning fees are expected to yield an additional income of £265,000 over this initial two year period to further contribute towards the cost to complete the full review;
- (d) approve a budget of £200,000 to cover the preparation of a Design Code(s) for the Plan Area;
- (e) agree to update the *Statement of Community Involvement* to set out how the public and other interested parties will be consulted and can participate in the Local Plan review; and
- (f) agree to the formation of a cross-party working group to provide wider Member engagement, oversight and scrutiny into the preparation of the Local Plan.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Local plans are important as they shape how places across the New Forest District (outside of the National Park¹) will change in the future. They set a vision and key objectives for our area and provide a spatial strategy for how, when and where communities' needs will be addressed. They also typically contain planning policies on a range of matters, including supporting economic growth, protecting and enhancing our natural environment and valued landscapes, addressing and adapting to the impacts of climate change and ensuring that people's health and wellbeing are protected and enhanced through new development and its associated infrastructure.
- 2.2 When finalised, local plans are adopted as part of the statutory 'Development Plan'. It is the Development Plan that planning applications are then assessed against (along with any other material planning considerations). An adopted local plan also provides an investment framework for national government, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders.

¹ Responsibilities for the preparation of a Local Plan for the New Forest National Park rests with the New Forest National Park Authority

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The full Development Plan for New Forest District (outside of the National Park) (hereafter 'Plan Area') presently comprises:
- The *Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy* (2020);
 - A limited number of policies that are 'saved' from previous local plans including the *New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration* (2005), *Core Strategy* (2009) and the *Local Plan Part Two: Sites and Development Management* (2014). Saved policies remain relevant and continue to be formally applied to planning application decisions. Saved policies are listed in appendix A of the *Local Plan Part 1 Planning Strategy* (2020);
 - 'Made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Development Plans (currently in place for New Milton and Hythe & Dibden parishes), which would remain 'made' and are outside the scope of this report; and
 - The *Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan* (2013), which is prepared and updated by Hampshire County Council and is also outside the scope of this report.
- 3.2 It is a statutory requirement that councils should prepare a local plan and keep it up-to-date². Regulations require that it must be reviewed every five years³.
- 3.3 The Council's Local Plan Part 1 (2020) sets out the Council's vision and strategy for accommodating future growth within the Plan Area and key policies to shape its communities and to protect and enhance its environment. Amongst its provisions, it identifies a requirement for 10,420 additional homes within the Plan Area during 2016-2036, of which 9,600 were specifically provided for through existing commitments and new allocated sites. It was intended that this would be followed by a Local Plan Part 2 covering development management policies and smaller-scale development sites (to provide at least 800 additional homes).
- 3.4 The month after the adoption of the Local Plan Part 1 by the Council, the government published the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper proposing significant changes to the planning system including for plan-making. This was followed by the passing through Parliament of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (Royal Assent in October 2023), and a number of changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the most recent of which was published in December 2023⁴.
- 3.5 As a consequence of this lack of clarity, as well as other factors including the impact of Covid-19, the Local Plan Part 2 has not been progressed in accordance with the timetable previously committed to by the Council in its Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2021.
- 3.6 During this period, the construction and supply of new homes has fallen significantly below previous forecasts, for a range of reasons. This included water nutrient issues delaying the issuing of planning permissions and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The consequence of this is that the Council is currently only able to demonstrate about 3 years of supply of land for homes. This scale of shortfall represents a significant challenge to address.

² Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 as amended.

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>, updated December 2023.

4. OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

4.1 It is considered that there are three options available to the Council in response to the issues raised, with a recommendation that the third option be pursued for the reasons set out in section 5.

- Option 1: Continue to pause work on a Local Plan until July 2025
- Option 2: Progress work on a Local Plan Part Two
- Option 3: Commence a formal review of the Development Plan

5. DISCUSSION

Option 1: Continue to pause work on a Local Plan until July 2025

5.1 Technically, a review of the Development Plan isn't required until July 2025 (five years after adoption of the Local Plan Part 1, 2020). Delaying a review until closer to July 2025 for the remaining details of the reforms to be clarified has some merit in ensuring that the limited resources available to the Council are not potentially focussed on matters that get superseded by possible future events and further changes to the planning system.

5.2 However, a delay in commencing a full review at this time would have the effect of extending the period post July 2025 where the Council would not have an up-to-date Local Plan. This is likely to include a need to review the locations and standards for future housing development, and taking a more pro-active lead on key policy areas such as the climate and nature emergency which the current Local Plan only partially addresses. Opportunities for our District resulting from the designation of the Solent Freeport since the adoption of the current Local Plan is a further consideration.

Option 2: Progress work on a Local Plan Part 2

5.3 A Local Plan Part 2 could be prepared more quickly than a full review, identifying smaller sites (less than 100 homes) across the Plan Area which could help to address some of the shortfalls in housing land supply, whilst also updating Development Management policies to ensure compliance with the NPPF.

5.4 The scope of a Local Plan Part 2 is limited by the provisions of the Part 1 Local Plan. It could not fully address the climate and nature emergency, and the figure of an additional 800 homes is not now sufficient to fully address shortfalls in housing land supply from that originally expected. The Part 1 Local Plan, including its housing target, is also becoming increasingly dated as it was prepared under a superseded 2012 version of the NPPF (see below).

5.5 Taken together this means that there is a significant risk that a Local Plan Part 2 would not be found sound at independent examination. Even if it was found sound, the benefits of a Part 2 Local Plan would be partial and short-lived compared to those of a full Local Plan review, suggesting that Council resources should not be committed on this approach.

Option 3: Commence a full formal review of the Development Plan

5.6 The adopted Local Plan Part 1 (2020), inter alia, sets out the key spatial planning strategy for meeting identified development needs and is considered out-of-date in some key respects:

- **Compliance with latest NPPF** – It does not fully address the requirements of the current NPPF, notably for housing provision, as it was prepared under an earlier (2012) version. Further significant changes to the NPPF were published in December 2023 which indicate that the Local Plan Part 1 is becoming further out of date. A plan that is compliant with the most recent NPPF will ensure it is more resilient to any future changes in national policy.
- **Lower than expected housing delivery** – Housing delivery has fallen significantly behind the Local Plan Part 1 trajectory and the existing planning policies are, on balance, not likely to be capable of fully addressing this shortfall in the period up to 2036. A new Local Plan would provide the most appropriate option to addressing the future housing needs of the Plan Area.
- **Climate change and nature recovery** - The Local Plan Part 1 precedes and therefore does not fully address or reflect the implications of the Council's Climate and Nature Emergency declaration and accompanying strategy. Nor does it address changes in national policy and regulations, including those provided for in the Environment Act 2022 addressing local nature recovery and biodiversity net gain.

5.7 In addition, there are a number of the policies saved from earlier local plans that are likely to be no longer relevant or require significant updating, or that may be superseded by standard national development management policies. It will also be helpful to future users to bring all local plan policies into a single document, which is also the advice of national policy.

5.8 There are also a number of wider challenges and opportunities that the Council should be responding to including:

- **Demography** - the 2021 Census records that the New Forest District population is both shrinking, which is almost unheard of, and ageing further (more so than Hampshire and England averages). A new Local Plan needs to be informed by those demographic trends and will need to consider the implications of its age profile upon the type and location of development.
- **Freeport** – designation of parts of the Waterside as a Freeport took place after the adoption of the Local Plan Part 1 so were not directly reflected in the Plan. Its designation is anticipated to stimulate economic growth and provide longer term benefits and opportunities. A review of the Local Plan would help to ensure that these opportunities are sustainable and secured in the long term and that appropriate planning policies to manage development proposals are in place.
- **Transport** - proposals including proposed A326 widening and the possible re-opening of the Waterside Rail to passenger traffic could transform the accessibility and potential of parts of the Waterside area.
- **Transport policy** - the emerging Hampshire Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is due for adoption by the County Council in 2024. It represents a shift in transport policy towards planning for movements focused on people and places, as well as reflecting national transport policy priorities such as decarbonising the transport system, reducing reliance on private car travel, supporting sustainable economic development regeneration and promoting active lifestyles.
- **Covid-19 implications** – the pandemic changed the way many people live, work and shop, with significant implications for town centres, high streets, goods

movement and some employment areas. These changes in turn create policy challenges and opportunities best considered through a Local Plan review.

- 5.9 For the reasons as set out above, commencing work on a full review of the Local Plan is recommended, as a single comprehensive document. This would provide an opportunity to set a new vision and framework for the Plan Area which provides for the sustainable development of high-quality, well-planned places and environments that address housing need and economic opportunity.
- 5.10 An updated Local Plan would also provide a better starting point for neighbourhood plan preparation or provide a trigger to update those plans that are already 'made'. Given neighbourhood plans become part of the Development Plan when they are made, alongside the Local Plan, there may be scope to work flexibly or collaboratively with designated neighbourhood areas working on neighbourhood plans to formulate planning policies for these areas.

6. THE NEED FOR A DESIGN CODE

- 6.1 Design Codes (or Guides) provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high-quality standard of design. A requirement to produce them is set out in the most recent version of the NPPF (para 133). This provision is also reflected in the Levelling up and Regeneration Act where a legal responsibility will be placed on local planning authorities to produce Design Code(s) for their area. The Levelling up and Regeneration Act gives design codes equivalent weight to the Development Plan for planning decisions.
- 6.2 Design Codes can be produced either alongside the Development Plan or as a supplementary plan outside the plan making process. Codes should be based on effective community engagement from the initial stages and reflect local aspirations for managing change in their area. They should cover the full Plan Area, with the option to provide additional coverage or separate codes/typologies for specific areas or sites.
- 6.3 The government's emerging planning reforms propose that existing supplementary planning documents/guidance would cease to apply by no later than 2027. There are 16 general and area-specific design-related supplementary planning documents in current NFDC use for development management purposes. Much of their content remains relevant and useful, and to be retained it would need to be re-expressed or updated within the Design Code. This is a substantial piece of work, some of which could take place over a longer timeframe than the Local Plan review. The process might for example involve collaborative working with town and parish councils engaged in neighbourhood plan preparation, or with the promoters of sites allocated in future local plans. The expected cost of producing a Design Code for the New Forest Planning Area is £200,000. This is based on the emerging experiences of recent Pathfinder' Design Code pilot projects⁵.
- 6.4 The recommended approach is to begin work on a Plan Area wide Design Code as part of the Development Plan review. This will include exploring the best approach to area specific design coding in the form of place specific character area assessments which define distinctive design guidance to help manage change in areas where new development is coming forward.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-empowered-to-shape-design-of-neighbourhoods>

6.5 If (as expected) it is completed earlier than the Local Plan, there is the potential to adopt the Plan Area wide Design Code as a supplementary planning document, to provide some beneficial influence on development that may come forward before the Local Plan is adopted.

7. PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 At commencement of a formal review of the Local Plan, there is a regulatory requirement to publish a work programme, known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS)⁶. This must specify (among other matters) the documents (i.e. Local Plans) which, when prepared, will comprise the Development Plan for the area.

7.2 Regulations⁷ also set out that local plans must have at least:

- i. An initial, high-level informal public consultation (under Regulation 18) on the issues and scope of the plan, typically identifying the broad options available to address the identified issues; and
- ii. A final formal public consultation (under Regulation 19) on the preferred option of the plan, after a meeting of the full Council has agreed it should be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Any substantive changes thereafter would be as recommended by a planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

7.3 For full local plan reviews, it is good practice for councils to have an additional informal public consultation on a draft plan in near-final form prior to finalising the plan. This was the approach taken in the last NFDC Local Plan review.

7.4 If a full Local Plan review is pursued, it is recommended that a two-stage informal consultation is undertaken on the basis that this provides communities and stakeholders the opportunity to see and comment on the full draft plan before a finalised version is submitted to examination. This maximises the opportunities to ensure that the Plan is robust and that communities views are taken into account at each stage of plan preparation.

7.5 The process of reviewing and preparing plans must be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the planning system, including relevant acts and regulations. This is ever complex, noting the ongoing position set out at paragraph 3.4. It is also noted that with a national election due to be held no later than January 2025 there remains the prospect of further change in either policy or direction.

7.6 Whilst this makes for an uncertain context for Local Plan review timetable setting it is noted that the three largest political parties all support the need for additional housing provision, and it is important to make progress to deliver the homes that people need. To address this element of uncertainty the Local Development Scheme sets an initial timetable for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26, covering the production of a full draft Local Plan. The main stages are set out in the table below, with the details provided in the full Local Development Scheme document at Appendix One.

⁶ PPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 61-003-20190315: A Local Development Scheme is required under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

⁷ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

- 7.7 The timetable also has regard to the government’s view that the plan-making process changes set out in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act may enable Local Plans reviews to be prepared in a 30-month period.

Local Plan review key milestones

Dates	Activities and milestones
Spring 2024	Review inception, options testing and evidence base preparation, preparation of an updated Statement of Community Involvement.
Summer 2024	High level informal consultation on the scope of the Local Plan review and the issues that it should cover, indicating the broad options available to address these issues. This stage would not include specific sites or targets but would include an open invitation to propose development sites for future consideration. Consultation in parallel on an updated Statement of Community Involvement
Autumn 2024 – Summer 2025	Prepare a full draft Local Plan and evidence base
Summer - Autumn 2025	Agree and informally consult on a full draft Local Plan

- 7.8 When the outcome of potential planning system reforms becomes clearer the Local Development Scheme would need to be updated to set out the additional steps to finalise and submit the Local Plan for examination, and to take it through the examination process to adoption. Indicatively, should future plan-making arrangements remain similar to those currently in place, the final Local Plan and evidence base would be agreed by the Council and submitted for examination later in 2026. The timetable thereafter is at the discretion of the planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, but Local Plan adoption is typically at least 12 months thereafter.

8. MEMBERS’ CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP

- 8.1 The Local Plan review is a major corporate project that will affect many aspects of the Council’s activities, including as a vehicle to help to deliver wider Council objectives for the management and improvement of the Plan Area’s communities, environment, economy and infrastructure. It requires the Council to act collectively to meet its statutory and legal responsibilities and will require the Council to plan positively and proactively, for amongst other things, the location of new homes.
- 8.2 Ultimately the Local Plan must be agreed by the Council before it is submitted to the Government for independent examination, and again when it is adopted in final form after the examination process. It is therefore important to ensure that there is wider Member engagement in, and oversight and scrutiny of, the Local Plan preparation

process to maintain ownership and buy in. The formation of a cross-party Local Plan working group is recommended to help achieve this holistic and joined up approach.

9. CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

- 9.1 The Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and to update it every five years⁸. The SCI is a statutory document which sets out the consultation and engagement methods that the Council, as a minimum, will use to involve interested residents, groups, organisations, businesses and other representatives and individuals in the planning process. It explains who will be consulted, when and how.
- 9.2 The current SCI was adopted in October 2020 after Covid-related updating but requires further updating in relation to consultation arrangements for plan-making. Since 2020 national planning policy has been updated to stipulate that local plans should be ‘accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation’⁸.
- 9.3 The SCI, whilst a required statutory document, is also a public statement of the Council’s commitment to the involvement of the community in planning matters. Residents in turn are increasingly interested in the place shaping agenda. In the light of national policy updates on using technology to boost public engagement and this Council’s commitment to better digital engagement, it is important that the document is reviewed to bring it up to date. There are ways in which the Council can improve engagement through better use of existing groups and networks.
- 9.4 The Council will work particularly closely with partner organisations, such as the National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council, to ensure the Local Plan review is strategic in its outlook and establishes a robust basis for delivering sustainable development which puts place making at its heart, across the New Forest Plan Area.
- 9.5 The intention is that the SCI is updated to facilitate improved engagement and consultation techniques, and to ensure that a broad range of views from different sectors of the community are heard and considered. Subject to Cabinet’s decision on the Local Plan review, an updated SCI could be published alongside the Local Plan review Issues and Scope public consultation.

10. DEVELOPING AN EVIDENCE BASE AND BUDGETS

- 10.1 A full up-to-date, technical, and robust evidence base will need to be produced to demonstrate that future policies, targets and requirements are justified and deliverable. As well as taking in to account the recent changes referred to in this report such as the Freeport designation and changes to demographics, there are a number of factors to take into account when preparing such an evidence base through this Local Plan review:
- Environmental, social and economic changes since the last Local Plan was prepared.

⁸ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (legislation.gov.uk)

- The larger scope and length of time since the preparation of the Local Plan Part 1 is likely to mean that most existing evidence studies will need revisiting and updating, or to be prepared for the first time.
 - The need to undertake this at comparative speed to meet the possible introduction of a 30-month timescale as noted in paragraph 7.7.
- 10.2 A range of technical expertise will need to be procured or recruited to prepare this evidence, for which a budget will need to be agreed.
- 10.3 Along with the cost of preparing the evidence, the examination process alone is likely to be a significant future cost that may include legal advice in support.
- 10.4 A total figure of £700,000 should be budgeted for the next two financial years, to progress preparation of the full evidence base and towards independently examining the Local Plan. Spend will be monitored regularly and reported at least annually against this figure, that will in turn inform the budget for the remainder of the Local Plan review, anticipated to take a further 1 – 2 years. Further detail on the financial implications is provided in Section 12 of this report.

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The report sets out clear reasons why a move to a full Local Plan review is considered to be the best approach at this time and is more appropriate than the alternatives identified. A full review of the Local Plan:
- Is the only effective way to address key Council priorities and issues such as the declared climate and nature emergency, the current housing delivery shortfall and how best to optimise opportunities such as the Freeport, regeneration benefits and new transport infrastructure for our communities;
 - Provides longer term benefits and policy certainty, at lower risk, than progressing the Local Plan Part 2; and
 - In conjunction with design coding, provides the best mechanism to embed a design-led ‘placemaking’ approach to ensure that the future development needed is both aspirational and deliverable, and that it is shaped by early engagement with communities and local organisations and businesses, as well as with infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.
- 11.2 The full review will undertake work to understand what policies can remain and which will need updating, replacing with new policies or deleting.
- 11.3 The Local Plan review will be supported by the new requirement to prepare a Design Code that will place significant emphasis on embedding good design in new development.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Local Plan review will require a significant budget over a number of years and will impact and inform financial planning and budget setting by the Council for the time frame of the Local Plan preparation process.

- 12.2 The Council will require a budgeted sum of around £700,000 to initially progress the preparation of the Local Plan review in the next two financial years, noting the complete review will likely require a further 1 – 2 years to complete.
- 12.3 The Council currently has a Local Plan provision of £370,000. This amount had previously been earmarked for the Part 2 review, and this amount is broadly sufficient to progress the initial stages of the Local Plan review. A further, as yet unbudgeted, figure of around £330,000 is likely to be required to progress the preparation of the evidence base and towards independently examining the Local Plan over the next two financial years.
- 12.4 Statutory increases in planning fees applicable from the 6th December 2023 will generate additional yield to the Council, with this yield being used to help finance the costs of the Local Plan review. Over the initial period 2024/25 – 2025/26, the yield should result in an income contribution towards the cost of the plan of circa £265,000.
- 12.5 On an indicative basis at this stage the profile of potential expenditure and funding amounts in each financial year is as follows:

Financial year	2024/25	2025/26
Indicative cost	£350,000	£350,000
Provision	(£155,000)	(£215,000)
Income Yield	(£130,000)	(£135,000)
Funding Shortfall ⁹	£65,000	£nil

- 12.6 The indicative cost figure represents a high-level estimate and will be subject to future inflationary pressures. However, in line with financial regulations no contingency has been added to this, instead there will be a regular review process to monitor costs and spending. This will be reported to the Council through the annual performance process, with additional financial updates as required. This review process will also inform the budget for the remaining period 2026/27 – 2027/28.
- 12.7 Separately, a further £200,000 is sought now to cover the preparation of a Design Code for the Plan Area during the period 2024-2027.
- 12.8 Whilst noting the substantial upfront costs, the Local Plan review will identify the funding and other delivery mechanisms required to secure the provision of any community services and benefits, green and built infrastructure required to ensure that planned development can be delivered in a sustainable manner. In this way, development has contributed several £millions in recent years through developer contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy for targeted investment in the local area by the Council and receiving town and parish councils in areas where there has been development.
- 12.9 The Local Plan can also be seen as an investment document for the Plan Area, identifying locations and quantum for future housing and employment growth, the associated annual rates thereafter generated, and the wider social, environmental and

⁹ The £65,000 funding shortfall will be factored into the Council's final budget planning for the 2024/25 financial year.

economic benefits generated from things such as more homes, increased jobs and habitat enhancement and creation as examples.

13. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 None arising from the report recommendations. The consideration of equality, social, environmental and other e.g. economic considerations is an integral part of the Local Plan preparation process, as is seeking and reconciling or balancing differing views on their relative importance.

14. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 Local Plan engagement including public consultation requires the collection and processing of some personal information in a manner compliant with GDPR.

15. PLACE & SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

- 15.1 The Panel endorsed all of the recommendations contained within the report. The Panel discussed the report and highlighted their support for Option 3: to Commence a formal review of the Development Plan. Some Members questioned whether there would be the opportunity, during the process, to review and change certain planning policies in order to give the Council greater flexibility in achieving the desired planning outcomes for the Plan Area. Ensuring the Local Plan can encourage and facilitate the development of appropriate levels of housing across the Plan Area was highlighted as another key aim of the review.

16. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 16.1 I support the review of the Local Plan and the proposed recommendations to Council contained within this report. Ensuring our Council has an up-to-date plan is essential so that our communities' needs are clearly planned for in a way which delivers high quality development in sustainable locations. As the Freeport proposals progress, the Local Plan Review will ensure that these potential opportunities can be properly managed and secured in the long term. This review will also enable us to properly plan for the necessary infrastructure (including transport) for our communities.

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Background Papers:

None

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New Forest District (Outside the National Park)

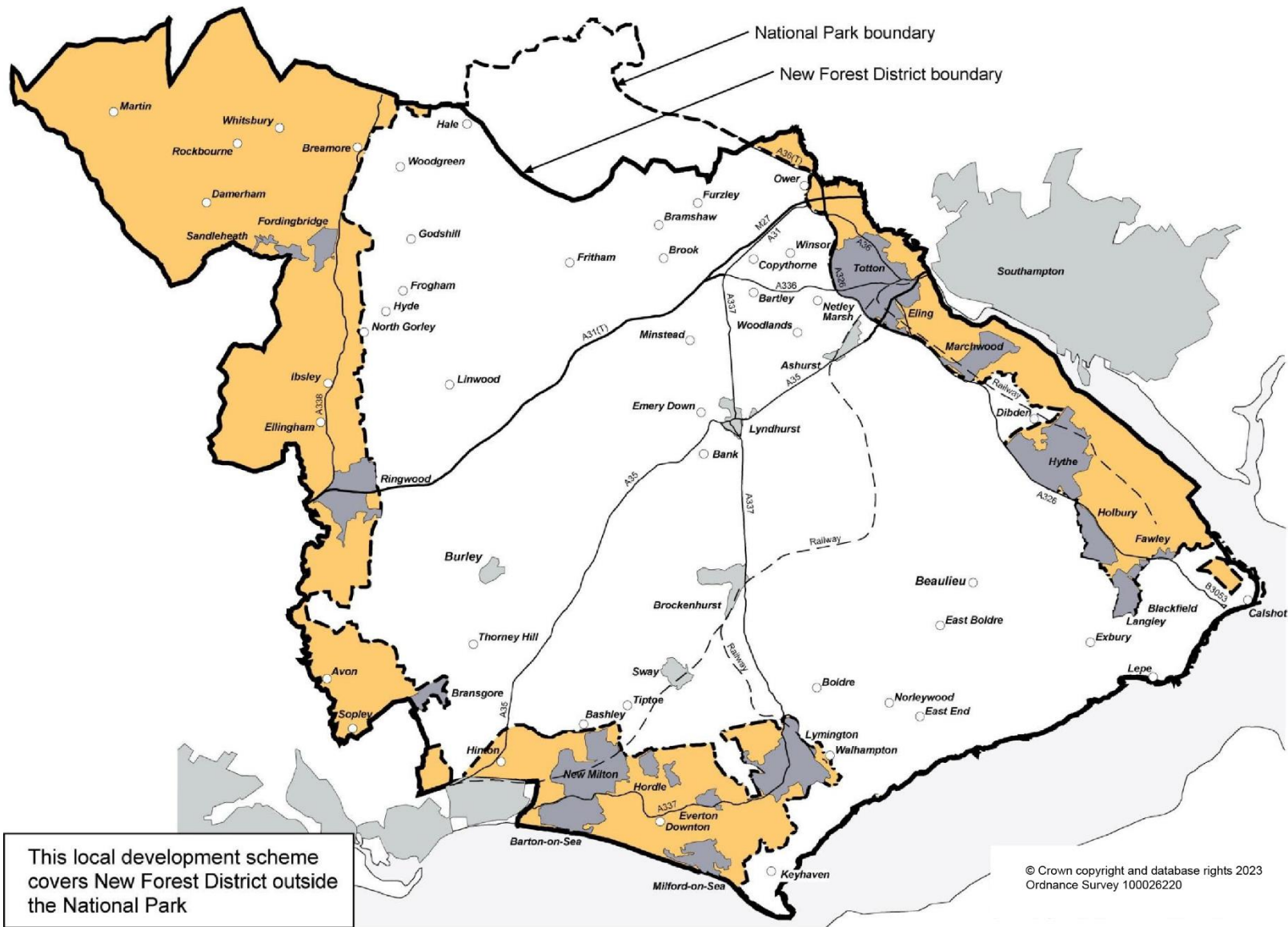
Local Development Scheme

DRAFT February 2024



Contents

		Page
Section No.	Map of New Forest District Council Local Planning Authority Area	2
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Context for the Local Development Scheme revision	3
3.	Local Plan review approach and programme	4
4.	Documents supporting the Local Plan	5
Annex 1	Initial programme for 2024/25 and 2025/26 for the preparation of the Local Plan review	6



1. Introduction

1.1. The Local Development Scheme provides information about the production of the New Forest District Local Plan for the area outside the New Forest National Park (see Map on page 2, areas in orange and settlements in dark grey) hereafter referred to as the 'plan area'. The National Park Authority is responsible for producing the Local Plan for the National Park area.

1.2. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the work programme for the Local Plan review and identifies when the public and other interested parties can get involved in the process of plan-making. It includes information about the content and production timetable for the Local Plan review, superseding the previous 2021 version which addressed preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 2016-2036. The Local Plan Part 2 is no longer being progressed, work undertaken so far will be included within the full Local Plan review.

1.3. The Local Plan is the most important part of the Development Plan for the plan area. The Development Plan is the statutory basis for deciding planning applications, provided that it is up to date. As at February 2024 the Development Plan for New Forest District (outside the National Park) comprises the following:

- the [Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy](#) adopted July 2020
- Saved policies from the following earlier Local Plans as listed in Appendix A of the Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy (2020)
 - the [Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy](#) adopted in October 2009
 - the [Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management](#) adopted in April 2014
 - Policy DW-E12: Protection of Landscape Features - saved from the [Local Plan First Review](#) (2005).
- the [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#) adopted by the Hampshire Minerals and Waste authorities in October 2013
- 'Made' (Adopted by a supportive local referendum, after review by an independent examiner) [Neighbourhood Development Plans](#) - as at February 2024 [Hythe & Dibden](#) and [New Milton](#) Town or Parish Council areas.

1.4. As at February 2024 Neighbourhood Plans are being prepared by [Totton & Eling](#), [Lymington and Pennington](#), and [Ringwood](#) Town Councils. If 'made' these Neighbourhood Plans would also become part of the Local Development Plan. [Fordingbridge](#) is designated as Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan but as yet no plans have been drafted or published.

2. Context for the Local Development Scheme (LDS) update

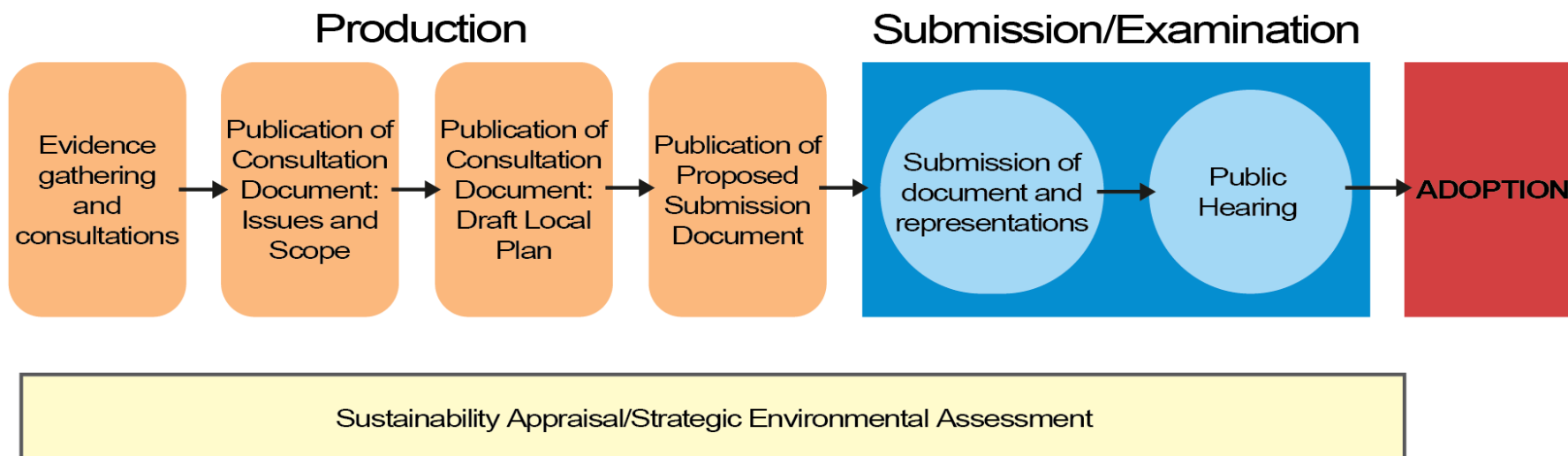
2.1. [The Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1](#) was adopted in July 2020. It was prepared in a period of national planning policy transition, notably in respect of calculating housing need and the setting of housing targets. The Plan was found sound (subject to agreed modifications) with no requirement for early review in the light of the new planning guidance in place at the time of Local Plan examination.

2.2. Shortly after the adoption of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 in 2020 the government consulted on wide-ranging changes to the planning system and the plan-making process. The Council paused work on the Local Plan Part 2 until it became clearer whether further work on it would be overtaken by events.

2.3. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) makes revisions to the plan-making process, requiring local plans to be focussed on locally distinctive matters (including identifying land for development and other needs), and that they should be contained in a single document. Subsequent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) were published in December 2023. Further planned changes to the planning system are expected, including introducing national development management policies for the first time.

3. Local Plan review approach and programme

3.1. [Regulations](#) set out the main requirements for preparing a local plan. The general process followed is shown in the illustration below, this may evolve as further planning reforms details are introduced.



3.2. The next Local Plan review will comprise a single document, replacing the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 and all policies ‘saved’ from earlier Local Plans.

3.3. There can be more than one public consultation before the Local Plan review is published in final 'submission' form (when it is open for further public consultation to inform the examination process). Prior to the final submission stage of public consultation, the Council intends to hold an early consultation in summer 2024 on the issues the Local Plan review should cover and its scope. This will be followed by consultation on a full draft of the Local Plan review in Summer/Autumn 2025.

3.4. A timetable and programme for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 is provided at Annex 1, covering the period up to publication of a full draft Local Plan review for public consultation. A programme for the additional stages through to examination and adoption will be agreed and published at a later date, once the full details and scope of planning system reforms are available. Any minor timetable adjustments prior to this update will be published on the 'Local Development Scheme' section of our [development plan page](#).

3.5. For areas where a Neighbourhood Plan is being actively prepared and positive progress is being made, the scope and content of the Local Plan review will be considered in the light of community-led planning objectives. The aim will be to ensure the timely progression of a sufficient and consistent planning framework for the plan area as a whole, whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication.

4. Documents supporting the Local Plan

4.1. A full evidence base will be prepared to support the exploration and testing of key issues and feasible policy options for the Local Plan review.

4.2. A range of existing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and other supplementary guidance supports the adopted Local Plan 2016-2036, although these are expected to cease to apply from 2027 under the provisions of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023). Further details on supplementary guidance can be found on our [Planning Policy guidance page](#).

4.3. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) requires that a Design Code (or Codes) be prepared to cover the full local plan area. This work would replace, in whole or part, existing SPD or supplementary guidance documents that provide guidance on local design and character. A plan area-wide Design Code will be prepared alongside the Local Plan review. Further Design Codes for specific communities, sites or types of development will be considered.

Annex 1: Initial programme for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and for the preparation of the Local Plan review

New Forest District (outside the National Park) Local Plan Review programme

Local Plan Review		2024				2025				
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Initial evidence base scoping and commissioning										
Preparation of an Issues and Scope public consultation document										
Public consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Scope ('Regulation 18') (including a 'call for sites')										
Consultation review, evidence base development, option testing, Local Plan drafting										
Public Consultation on a full Draft Local Plan ('Regulation 18')										
Consultation review, further testing and refinement										
Public Consultation on Published Plan (regulation 19)										
Examination period ¹	Submit published local plan for independent examination (regulation 22)									
	Examination hearing									
	In-examination Modifications and consultation, if recommended by the Inspector									
	Inspector's report									
Adoption										

To be published at a later date once planning reforms in progress are finalised.

1. The timing and duration of the examination period is at the discretion of the Planning Inspectorate. Modifications of some form may be required. These may affect the final Local Plan adoption date.

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TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the current draft of the Tenant Engagement Strategy, before being presented to Council on 26 February for final approval and adoption by the Council.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report presents the Council's draft Tenant Engagement Strategy. This is a new Strategy, produced in response to The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper in 2020, and the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023. Due regard has also been given to latest guidance and best practice, and it has been co-produced with housing practitioners and tenants. The proposed Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The original draft Tenant Engagement Strategy has been reviewed by the Tenant Involvement Group, the Executive Management Team, the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and Cabinet in October 2023, to seek approval to launch a formal four-week consultation process.
- 2.3 Consultation is now concluded, and the Strategy has been designed with an aim for the Cabinet/Council to formally agree and adopt the Strategy in 2024.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper published in 2020 set out the Government's clear expectations for social housing providers, with 7 clear priorities:
- i. To be safe in your home.
 - ii. To know how your landlord is performing.
 - iii. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
 - iv. To be treated with respect.
 - v. To have your voice heard by your landlord.
 - vi. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.
 - vii. To be supported to take your first step to ownership.
- 3.2 The Regulator for Social Housing has received greater powers to ensure that the highest standards of social housing services are delivered. This is supplemented further by the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, including a revised set of Consumer Standards currently being consulted on, and anticipated to be finalised later in 2023, which sets out the detailed regulatory expectations of landlords. The Regulator of Social Housing has also been clear that landlords' focus should not only be on meeting prescribed standards, but also on doing the right thing for their tenants.
- 3.3 The Housing Ombudsman has highlighted the need to 'know your tenants' to provide and tailor services important to individuals and communities. The Council needs to

ensure that it is reviewing the data it needs to collect and hold relating to its tenants and their household makeup. There is also a need to ensure that information is relevant to the Council's tenants and services and is easily accessible to enable transparency and accountability.

- 3.4 The Council currently has a traditional model of tenant engagement, based around formal engagement with a central group of tenants making up the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG). This group have been able to influence many aspects of what the Council do, and their work is greatly valued. They understand there is more to do to engage with the wider housing communities and enable a wider tenants' voice to influence and inform the Council's Housing Services. The Council need to make available a range of options for tenants to interact with the Council's housing services, in ways that suit them, and which recognises their diversity.
- 3.5 The Housing Service is committed to improving outward facing communication and provision of information, and ensuring engagement takes place in a way that represents the needs of all tenants, with a data collection exercise informing the design of the engagement approach and future service reviews.
- 3.6 It is clear in the current wider housing landscape, registered providers need to do more to ensure that tenants have a voice that is heard not only by their front-line housing services, but also across all levels, including within the governance structures of their respective bodies. That 'tenant voice' needs to be representative of the Council tenant population, and the communities in which they live.
- 3.7 The effectiveness of the Strategy will depend on good communication between tenants and the Council. There is a need to have a wide range of communication methods and the ability for tenants to hear about how Housing Services are performing and what is important to them. The Council needs to make it easy for tenants to feed into the key housing activities that affect their lives and feel genuinely involved in a partnership with the Council.

4. KEY COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The Council are proposing to build a vision and strategy on 4 strategic priorities as follows:-
 - 4.1.1 **Priority One: Listening to our Tenants.** Tenants are best placed to tell the Council what is working well and what can be done better. A wide and diverse range of tenants must have opportunities to have their voices heard regarding the services they receive and any significant changes the Council wishes to implement, with a clear line of sight to the governance structures within the Council.
 - 4.1.2 **Priority Two: Putting Tenants First.** The Council will work with employees to reinforce accountability at all levels of the housing service. The Council wants to work in partnership with tenants to collectively improve services and outcomes for both tenants and teams working within the housing services.
 - 4.1.3 **Priority Three: Knowing our Tenants and supporting engagement.** Record keeping and data management is a crucial part of the Strategy and the Council's tenant engagement approach. The Council needs to know its tenants in order to provide services that are important to them and be able to respond based on the needs of those tenants. The Council also needs to ensure compliance with the requirements of the regulator and Housing Ombudsman expectations.

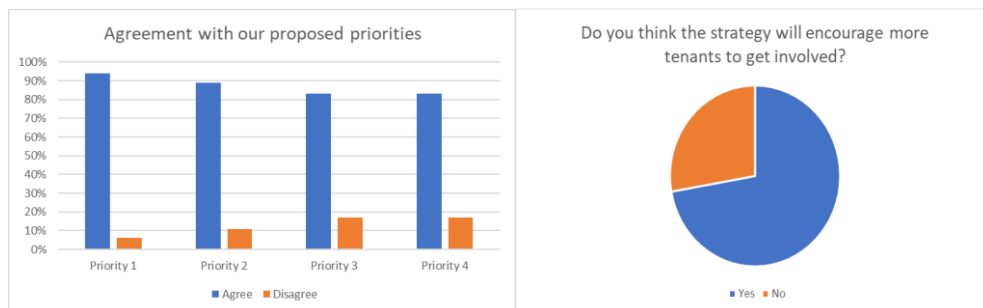
4.1.4 **Priority Four: How we Communicate with Tenants.** Effective communication is key to the success, not only of the strategy, but for Tenant engagement and employee buy-in. The Council needs to make it easier for tenants to hold the housing services to account and make the information they are looking for easy to find and transparent.

5. CONSULTATION DETAILS AND OUTCOMES

5.1 Consultation ran from 16 October 2023 to 20 November 2023 (a total of 5 weeks) and was promoted via a mix of social media campaigning (3 rounds of posts on Facebook and LinkedIn); posters put up at schemes and distributed via the Tenancy Management Team and online promotion of the ways to take part via our online participation platform, Citizen Lab. We also took the opportunity to actively speak with people at the hubs and encouraging participation via word of mouth.

5.2 Tenants, practitioners and stakeholders were all invited to take part in the consultation and were enabled to do so in person at each of our 5 hubs, digitally on Citizen Lab, by phone and email. A total of 18 people took part in the consultation (13 online & 5 in person).

5.3 The majority of those that took part in the consultation either strongly agreed or slightly agreed with each of the Councils four proposed priorities, and 72% felt the Strategy would encourage more tenants to get involved with the Councils Housing Services, as shown in the charts below:



5.4 General feedback via comments was either positive, or focussed on existing performance dissatisfaction, which this Strategy aims to address. However, general comments noted:

“I feel the tenants would engage more, as they would feel they are being listened to and especially if we put the strategy in place and do follows up and ask for feedback”.

“More actual interactions face to face NFDC to be in attendance at events and carnivals and perhaps drop in options around the New Forest”.

“This strategy is full of good ideas, but the practicalities will show if it works. It will need successful measurements and a want to build trust”.

“Rubbish title - would prefer 'tenants have your say. Also need to make sure that individuals don't dominate tenant involvement, and become overpowering”.

“This will be good once in place but people struggle with online/zoom etc. so email or phone calls are better in my opinion. This is all very well in theory. It will be good to be implemented”.

“Amazing strategy. Hopefully it gets into action so tenants can see and feel they are involved and listened to”.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The proposed Tenant Engagement Strategy supports the Council to deliver on new regulatory requirements and expected consumer standards arising from the Social Housing Regulation Act. This will place the tenant, their needs, and importantly their voice at the heart of the Council’s Housing Service.
- 6.2 Following recommendations from EMT, the Strategy has been amended to:
 - 6.2.1 Include an earlier reference to the four strategic priorities (within the Foreword).
 - 6.2.2 Give more deliverable timescales within the annexed action plan.
- 6.3 The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel fully supported the Tenant Engagement Strategy for approval following public consultation. It was noted that there had been a limited response to the consultation on the Strategy, but the responses received had been very supportive. The Tenant Involvement Group had also been consulted.
- 6.4 It is proposed that the Strategy now be adopted without further amendments given the support it has received from Involved Tenants, Members, and staff, alongside the positive feedback from the consultation exercise.
- 6.5 If supported, the proposed Strategy will be presented to the Council on 26 February 2024 for final approval and adoption.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Budgets for the Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and the data collection survey have been approved previously by EMT and Cabinet/Council in 22/23.
- 7.2 There is a likelihood for future implications on existing budgets within the Housing Revenue Account due to an increase in tenant engagement and the Council’s response to feedback. However, any changes, service redesign and introduction of new and additional processes will be actioned within existing budgets as natural efficiencies are created.

8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Whilst there are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this Strategy, it is anticipated there will be potential indirect and positive impacts on the Council’s tenants and neighbourhoods.
- 8.2 Through successful implementation of this Strategy, the Council will see an improvement in partnership working with Tenants and local partners, such as the Council’s Community Safety Team and the Police in the reporting, investigation and resolution of Anti-Social Behaviour in local communities.
- 8.3 Increased feedback and communication mechanisms may also highlight new and emerging issues relating to crime and disorder which will allow the Council to plan and respond appropriately.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are limited implications and environmental impact arising from this strategy. However, employees will give due regard to positive impacts on the environment when conducting activities that require travel. The introduction of digital engagement methods will reduce travel, production of mail and other publications.
- 9.2 Environment and sustainability will be considered alongside any specific Tenant Engagement project or activity.
- 9.3 Improvements in neighbourhood and community appearance would also be expected as a result of this strategy. Increased engagement and understanding what is important to tenants should lead to estate improvement ideas being raised, considered and implemented – ‘placemaking’ and estate improvement being a tangible outcome that can be measured.

10. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are several actions in the strategy which relate to diversity. The Council is not currently in a fully informed position as to the personal characteristics of its tenants and their household members. Therefore, a key action is to undertake a full personal data survey of tenants to better understand who is occupying the Council’s homes. This survey will also capture additional needs and support required by the Council’s tenants.
- 10.2 This information will be used to better understand the needs of the Council’s tenants and how services should be designed in future to meet these needs and to ensure services and engagement is fully accessible to all.
- 10.3 With full accessibility in mind the strategy supports establishing several methods of tenant communication and engagement. This will include an assessment of fully accessible methods of communication which are available to tenants with disabilities and other characteristics which require barriers to be removed to allow access.

11. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The collection, retention and deletion of Tenant data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. The Housing Ombudsman has also given a clear direction on expectations for data collection and data handling. There are clear and legitimate reasons for the Council to hold and process data and sensitive data relating to tenants to enable delivery of the services that are provided. However, all data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

12. HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

- 12.1 The Panel fully supported the proposed draft Tenant Engagement Strategy for approval by Cabinet.

13. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 13.1 I am delighted to welcome the consultation for the new Tenant Engagement Strategy. The Strategy represents a huge step forward for our relationship with our tenants which is important and highly valued.

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Background Papers:

[The Charter for Social Housing Residents](#)

Published documents



Tenant Engagement Strategy

2024-2028



Contents

Joint foreword	3
A joint foreword by Cllr Steve Davies, Alex Elliot, and Alaine Willis	3
National context	5
Local context.....	7
Our vision and strategy are built on 4 strategic priorities.....	8
Achievements to date	10
Strategy priority 1	12
Listening to our tenants.....	12
Strategy priority 2	14
Putting tenants first	14
Strategy priority 3	16
Knowing our tenants and supporting engagement	16
Strategy priority 4	18
How we communicate with tenants.....	18
Implementation and delivery	21
Proactive engagement	21
Responsive engagement	21
Structured engagement.....	22
Outcomes and actions	22
Measure of success.....	23
Monitoring and governance: key measurements of success.....	23
Annexe 1: Strategy Action Plan	25
Priority 1, listening to our tenants.....	25
Priority 2, putting tenants first.....	26
Priority 3, knowing our tenants and supporting engagement.....	27
Priority 4, how we communicate with tenants.....	28
Priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4	29
Priorities 1 and 4	30

Joint foreword

A joint foreword by Cllr Steve Davies, Alex Elliot, and Alaine Willis.



Cllr Steve Davies, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, says:

I very much know from my own role as a New Forest District Councillor that the emphasis on engagement and co-creation of strategies, services and policy design with tenants has changed significantly over the last few years, quite rightly culminating with the Charter for Social Housing Residents 2022 and the subsequent Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

I am very keen that this new legislation, not only bolsters our Tenant Engagement Strategy, but renews the Council's commitment to delivering positive engagement, in all forms, with our tenants, leaseholders, staff and other stakeholders.

The housing sector has had to learn the hard way from both tragedy, and the feedback of tenants across the country. We have always been ambitious and passionate about a continuous journey of improvement for our housing service, so I am very supportive of a clear strategy that sets the tone of a renewed engagement approach and is a real driver for cultural change in delivering on our strategic promises, in partnership with our tenants.

This strategy aims to put our tenants at the very heart of our Housing Services, setting out how they will have a clear role in engaging with, shaping, and scrutinising our services – holding us to account and ensuring the best outcomes for our tenants, the communities in which they live, and for the Council's housing services.

I am pleased that our strategic priorities of **'listening to our tenants'**, **'putting tenants first'**, **'knowing our tenants'**, and **'how we communicate with tenants'**, have been co-produced with tenants, and our staff, to ensure everything we aim to achieve is supported by the tenants' voice, and those who will implement the actions.

In my role as Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, I am excited to see how we encourage new tenants to get involved, what new feedback we receive and how we use that feedback to continually improve our service. An exciting journey lies ahead.



Alex Elliot, member of Tenant Involvement, says:

Staff at NFDC work day in, and day out to deliver good, high quality housing services to tenants who live within our district. However, in the past tenants haven't always had a big enough say in how the council delivered those services. I'm excited this published tenant engagement strategy shows how seriously NFDC takes what their tenants have to say and to put them on an equal footing alongside staff members. Social housing regulations are changing all the time, but tenants and their voice will continue to be needed to be heard, no matter what changes, so I would urge any of my fellow tenants to get involved.



Alaine Willis, member of Tenant Involvement, says:

It's great to be part of the effort New Forest District Council makes to engage with their tenants in a respectful and caring manner. Whilst many things have changed over the years, this has always been for the better and I feel that now is another opportunity to continue our journey, with tenants being involved in implementing the changes. As we used to say... We have a voice... and it is good to know that we have been heard.



National context

National Housing regulations and nationally responsible bodies such as the Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman prescribe that a decent and safe home for tenants, receiving quality services that are important to them and their communities should be at the core of any social housing service. Yet, over the last few years national news headlines have prominently featured many tragic cases of those living in Social Housing experiencing apathy and, in the very worst cases, fatal consequences of poor housing conditions, or a failure to act on critically important feedback or a call to action from tenants.

As a result, there has been intense scrutiny and resulting government policy, guidance and legislation that are all relevant to this strategy and beyond. Fire safety, damp and mould, social housing stigma, inequality and racism, lack of engagement, skills and experience, and traditional and unhelpful views on what it means to be a 'social housing tenant' have all been called out in recent years, highlighting a need to change, to do better, and to evolve with a modern and diverse world.

Via the Regulator of Social Housing the Government took charge, publishing 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper' in 2020 which set out the Government's clear expectations for social housing providers.

In it they set out 7 clear priorities:

1. **To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The Regulator has received greater powers to ensure the highest standards of housing and services are delivered, which are further bolstered by the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, and a revised set of Consumer Standards to be finalised later in 2023 setting out the detailed regulatory expectations of landlords and revised electrical and Decent Homes Standards, along with the legal requirement to have senior decision-making officers qualified to designated levels.

The Housing Ombudsman Service has also strengthened their approach and now their responses to failings and best practice feature prominently. The stronger relationship they have with the regulator closes feedback loops, with failings identified by the Ombudsman leading to real change expected by the Regulator.

The introduction of a new Tenant Satisfaction regime from April 2023 requires data collection against 10 management performance measures, and surveying of tenants for their views against 12 perception measures. Tenants will be asked about how well landlords engage, listen, and respond to them.

Landlord performance data will be published in the Autumn of 2024 in national league tables allowing for meaningful comparisons to be made across the sector for the first time.

However, The Regulator of Social Housing has been clear, our focus should not only be on meeting prescribed standards– it remains firm on landlords doing the right things for their tenants.



Local context

Our tenants and the communities they live are an ongoing priority for this council, which is supported by the themes in our new Corporate Plan 2024-2028. We are keen to promote opportunities to gather feedback from our tenants as we look to continually improve and evolve our services.

We have previously operated a very traditional model of tenant engagement, based around a formal engagement with a central group of tenants, which is in need of review and a refresh. Through a very narrowly focussed offer to become involved with the Council our tenants may be unaware of the possibilities and opportunities to get involved, so we need to ensure we make available, and publish, a range of options for tenants to interact with us, in ways that suit them and make them want to work with us.

The Housing Ombudsman has highlighted the need to 'know our tenants', to truly provide and tailor services important to individuals and communities.

Whilst we need to improve our outward facing communication and information, we also need to ensure we engage with tenants who represent the diversity of all of our tenant needs and backgrounds, with a data collection exercise informing the design of our engagement approach and future service reviews.

NFDC already have an engaged, enthusiastic, and well represented Tenant Involvement

Group (TIG). However, the members of the TIG have told us that there is more to do to engage with our wider housing communities and enable a wider tenants voice to influence and inform our Housing Services.

Alongside this, it is clear in the current wider housing landscape, we can do more to ensure that our tenants have a voice that is heard not only by all our front-line housing services, but also across all levels, including in the governance structures, of the Service. That 'tenant voice' must be representative of the NFDC tenant population, and the communities in which they live.

Both the Ombudsman and Regulator make it clear that one of our priorities needs to be focused on knowledge and information management. Not only do we need to review the data we need to collect and hold, concerning our tenants and their household makeup (to enable a true understanding of our tenants, and ensure services are accessible and meet their needs) - but we also need to ensure that information is relevant to our tenants and services, and is easily accessible to enable transparency and accountability. It is important to stress that NFDC do not need to hold information that is not relevant – however, data which can inform our community makeup, will help drive and build better services for our tenants, and will enable us to measure the success of engaging with those communities to ensure fair and transparent representation.

In turn, this will enable effective communication between our tenants and teams, acknowledging that times and expectations have changed. We need to have a wide range of communication methods and the ability for tenants to hear about how we're performing and what's important to them. We need to make it easy for tenants to tell us about those important subjects, feed into our key activities that affect their lives, and feel genuinely involved in a partnership with NFDC.

The following key priorities will influence our approach to tenant engagement over the next 4 years and will be measured for success based on the 'key measures of success' highlighted on page 25 – reviewed annually (and periodically during each year).

Our vision and strategy are built on 4 strategic priorities.

These priorities are aiming for real, meaningful impact for both tenants and NFDC services. Our priorities will be reviewed regularly/annually by both tenant and colleagues to make sure we're on the right track and can be dialled up and down depending on what our tenants tell us as we progress with implementation.

Every tenant will be enabled to have a voice – but not every tenant wants to be part of a focus group or give up their time. We'll make it easy for our tenants to work with us,

whatever their circumstances or needs. Enabling tenants to shape and improve our services through effective implementation of our priorities.

Within this strategy references to 'tenants' includes general rented and leaseholders. And for the avoidance of doubt, this strategy is specifically for the tenants of New Forest District Council, as a landlord, and their communities.

Achievements to date

The Social Housing Regulator made it very clear not to wait for the SHR Bill to become law before acting on the changes required. Equally the Council has not waited for the implementation of this strategy before embarking on the delivery of key actions, which have been:

- a renewed focus on Scrutiny of our services, with the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) being able to challenge and review our services through a monthly Service Manager's update.
- the introduction of a new Tenant Engagement Manager role to continue to drive a focus on the tenant voice and support New Forest District Council to meet the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act.
- a Governance and Scrutiny Review completed by the TIG, feeding directly into the proposals within this strategy.
- implementation of a new Housing Management system – allowing us to better record and report on our customer data.
- all housing teams given regular briefings on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and new regulatory regime – to increase awareness and in preparation for renewed focus.
- the procurement of a digital platform that will allow digital participation and consultation on NFDCs project. Enabling and supporting co-production and to support listening to tenants' views.
- a group of our involved tenants participated in the consultation on both the proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Decent Homes Standard review.
- tenants helped us review our Void Standards and policy, plus monitored our progress against the policy by carrying out spot checks of our empty homes.
- tenants helped us review our new Mobility Scooter Policy.
- established new surveys to obtain tenant satisfaction with the handover of properties and completion of repairs.
- supported one of our TIG members join the national Social Housing Quality Residents' Panel.
- ensured leaseholders are consulted regarding the procurement of contractors ahead of maintenance schemes taking place in their respective buildings.

- introduced 3 new Building Safety Officer roles to provide a renewed focus on the upkeep of blocks of flats, whilst allowing for tenant feedback on safety issues to be recorded.
- developed a dissatisfaction and tenant feedback process using the new housing management process.
- published our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code.
- developed a range of performance and budget information to be published in an annual report.
- improved the level of safety information provided to tenants.
- increased the use of social media and press releases to make our residents aware of housing service initiatives.
- ensured tenants received effective engagement during major works projects, involving decanting to alternative accommodation at Compton House, Sarum House and Robertshaw House, as well as during the installation of 120 Air Source Heat Pumps.



Strategy priority 1

Listening to our tenants

Our tenants are best placed to tell us what's working well and what we can do better. A wide and diverse range of tenants must have opportunities to have their voices heard regarding the services they receive and any significant changes we wish to implement, with a clear line of sight to the Governance structures of the Council.

We will establish a clear offer to tenants on how their voice can be heard, by establishing a menu of engagement opportunities to encourage a diverse set of feedback. This will include:

- establishing a structure for Individual tenants, groups, or tenant associations to feed into formal scrutiny and decision-making processes.
- a review of the functions of our operational teams to ensure we have a presence in our communities and neighbourhoods.
- neighbourhood, rural and community outreach sessions.
- street and village meets.

- activities that support breaking down barriers and provide community cohesion, whilst providing opportunities to capture tenant feedback as a secondary aspect to the event.
- digital forums and surveys.
- transactional surveys, for example following a repair completion, or closure of an ASB case.

We will also:

- establish a protocol for appointed tenants to work alongside the Portfolio Holder, appointed Members of the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel, and senior officers to support co-creation, scrutiny, and feedback on performance.
- ensure tenants are aware of their local Councillors and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities and their ability to raise issues with them regarding the services they receive.
- implement a clear structure for active tenant accountability and feedback, with recruitment of specialised project groups to scrutinise and co-produce/co-create policies and strategies.
- establish tenant involvement in the procurement of housing services and contractors that affect tenants and ensure the same principles of tenant engagement are embedded and monitored within those procured services.
- encourage a diverse and well represented collective tenant voice.
- ensure service feedback and dissatisfaction provided by tenants is recorded electronically and escalated appropriately for action and long-term change.
- ensure information to support tenants to make corporate complaints and report repairs and ASB is easily accessible.



Strategy priority 2

Putting tenants first

We will work with our employees to reinforce accountability at all levels of our service. We want to work in partnership with tenants to collectively improve services and outcomes for both tenants and our teams.

We will:

- encourage ownership and accountability of services and actions required by our employees - from the top down – ensuring this is a focus for Members and Directors/Service Managers through the design of strategies and policies, regular briefings, and the inclusion of feedback in service design.
- ensure that tenant feedback is a standard agenda item for tenant facing services (through team meetings, toolbox talks and 1:1 meetings).
- ensure the tenant engagement team are involved in projects and policy/service re-design that will affect tenants.
- provide regular training, webinars and/or briefings to staff, to ensure good practice and relevant legislation is embedded within our Housing Services.

- continue to drive a culture of equality and fairness through data driven feedback, policy design, staff inductions and training. We will challenge negative perceptions and prejudice through education and highlighting 'the lived experience' of engaged tenants.
- establish a partnership approach with tenants where we actively build relationships and empower tenants, our staff, and Council Members to work together and pro-actively challenge poor service.
- build on a culture of collective accountability by encouraging cross-department working.
- establish partnerships with key agencies in the district who will support us deliver key priorities and deliver on their own strategic priorities for the benefit of our tenants.



Strategy priority 3

Knowing our tenants and supporting engagement

Record keeping and data management is a crucial part of listening, understanding, and responding to our tenants, whilst also informing service design. When we get this right, our tenants will receive a quality service that will be trusted. We need to know our tenants to provide services that are important to them and be able to respond based on the needs of those tenants. Without quality data, we can neither respond well, nor can we develop a truly tenant first approach – and at worst, risk being non-compliant with several regulatory expectations.

We will:

- undertake an initial review of our customer data, making sure it is both up to date and relevant - recording data on protected characteristics and housing needs.
- undertake a survey of tenants and their households to collect information relevant to future service design, including personal characteristics and household needs.
- only collect data that is meaningful, up to date, and relevant. To this end, we will periodically review the data we hold, and complete data cleansing exercises where needed.

- embed a data integrity ethos with customer facing teams, which also follows data retention schedules.
- ensure our performance framework adopts the ability for service and tenant feedback to help shape improvements and outcomes for tenants.
- aim to focus engagement activities in community areas and on specific services where needed.
- ensure that all customers have equal access to engagement opportunities and having their voice heard.
- understand the needs of both our own tenants, and other residents in our neighbourhoods and communities to help shape improvements that matter to them and in the places where our tenants live.
- embed how tenant characteristic data and performance data feeds back into service design and improvement.
- make it easy for our teams to use, share and update data that is relevant to their roles, to support effective customer service.



Strategy priority 4

How we communicate with tenants

We know that effective communication is key to the success of not only this strategy, but for tenant engagement and the effective delivery of our services and compliance against regulations. If we do not make it easy for tenants to hold us to account, or make the information they are looking for easy to find and transparent, or we make it difficult for our employees to close feedback loops – then we will be challenged to make any of our tenant engagement priorities work.

We will engage a range of communication methods that meet customer need including:

- outreach in our communities, such as community hubs.
- a digital platform to increase the number of consultation opportunities, project engagement and feedback.
- online communication channels via social media/Digital communication.
- increased access to customer facing teams through an increased presence of staff in our communities, neighbourhoods, and buildings.
- invitations to feedback on services received, such as reactive repairs.

- annual surveys and Tenant Satisfaction Measure perception surveys.
- improved website information and self service.
- publications and subject related guides and leaflets.
- this will include an assessment of fully accessible methods of communication which are available to tenants with disabilities and other characteristics which require barriers to be removed to allow access.

We will also:

- be consistent with our communication style/brand. This will be non-judgemental or 'stigma creating', that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion.
- keep tenants updated on the services that are important to them, using channels that tenants have told us works for them.
- promote positive outcomes and good practice, including positive tenant feedback – building trust with our tenants and teams.
- agree customer standards for response times to phone calls, email, and other feedback.
- acknowledge complaints and tenant correspondence within specified targets and keep tenants informed on the progress of their enquiries.
- communicate relevant Health and Safety information, tenant responsibility and building specific information to the residents that live there.
- communicate effectively with new tenants before they become our tenants and early on in their tenancy to ensure expectations are understood and tenancy support identified.
- ensure our services are responsive to communicating new and emerging issues, for example damp and mould.
- where issues arise or things go wrong e.g., communal boiler breakdowns, contact all affected tenants following a new agreed response and feedback plan.
- ensure that all Leasehold Section 20 consultations are undertaken where required, and that these are effective and compliant both legislatively and following best practice.

- communicate effectively with elected Members and/or other advocates working on behalf of tenants to help resolve matters raised. Where it is not possible to meet their expectations, we will explore alternative options and be honest with what we can achieve or provide.



Implementation and delivery

To meet these four priorities, we will take a flexible approach to tenant engagement – with a range of options to engage that can flex based on customer need. We will outline our formal approach to meeting these priorities in our action plan in Annexe 1. We will implement this with a mix of proactive, responsive, and structured engagement to achieve ‘diversity of voice’, and we’ll make it easy to engage however and whenever suits our tenants.

Proactive engagement

- Outreach
- Surveys
- Online consultation
- Service reviews
- Day to day Housing activities

Responsive engagement

- Complaints

- Dissatisfaction
- Tenant or Community specific issues

Structured engagement

- Tenant Advisory Board/Tenant Gateway
- Panels
- Groups
- Performance reporting
- Partnerships with communities and other agencies

Outcomes and actions

Our engagement activities and commitments in Priority 1 – Listening to Tenants will raise an increased level of feedback from tenants, leaseholders, residents, partner agencies, staff, and Members. It will be important to collate this feedback and ensure this learning is used to continually evaluate services and the actions within this strategy.

As a landlord the Council will be held accountable for its positive contribution to local neighbourhoods. It is therefore important that this strategy not only commits to engagement with tenants, but also residents, other landlords and agencies with a responsibility in local communities, such as the Police, Community Safety and the County Council.

In line with our values, we aim to deliver the following outcomes against the Council's values by the end of the strategy term:

We trust each other & reinforce this with mutual respect - our tenants will trust us and will work with us to inform and improve our services, and we will put things right when they go wrong. We know how important our tenants' homes and communities are - we're in this together and for a common goal of quality homes and services.

Communication is key & your voice will be heard - we will talk, listen, and understand each other. We will make it easy to hear each other and respond to things that matter. Our aim is to ensure an equitable tenant voice, with no group or individual being underrepresented or excluded (no one's opinion/thoughts is amplified over others) - every tenant has a voice if you want or need to be heard.

Measure of success

Monitoring and governance: key measurements of success

The outcomes of the strategy and the work programme will be under continual monitoring and review. Updates to Members and the Council's Executive Management Team will be provided at least annually.

The tenant perception surveys carried out each year will provide valuable insight in to how satisfied our tenants are. It is accepted that there are some quick wins that can be implemented, whilst other changes will take time. Annex 1 allows us to flex our approach and timescales, but the aim will always be to achieve the priorities in this strategy before the end of 2028. The priorities that our tenants tell us mean the most to them will be our focus.

Our key measures of success will be quantitative:

- Improved satisfaction performance year on year following on from the initial set of Tenant Satisfaction Survey Perception Surveys in 23/24.
- Improved satisfaction performance from service surveys year in year.
- Reduction in the number of stage 1 and 2 complaints received from tenants compared with the 23/24 financial year.
- Reduction in the number of disrepair claims compared with the 23/24 financial year.

Our key measures of success will also be qualitative:

- By December 2028 there will be a clear direct line of sight from tenants to the Portfolio Holder for Housing. Tenants will tell us that they are able to directly influence and scrutinise our services (measured by feedback from our Tenant Governance Structure and tenant surveys).
- Tenants will have access to/be provided with accessible meaningful data to judge our performance.
- Our teams and tenants will tell us our tenant data is up to date and accurate.
- Learning from complaints will be embedded into service design and re-design.
- Tenant feedback will tell us where we are not getting things right. Our aim will always be to listen, understand and resolve complaints though to a mutually agreeable outcome.

- We will see and be able to demonstrate a diverse mix of proactively engaged tenants which represents our wider tenant makeup. If part of a formal group, we will be able to measure this via our tenant data and tenant population. However, we will also accept anecdotal feedback (for example if we are completing an online consultation and tenants are not required to provide specific personal data).
- Customer facing teams will tell us/be able to demonstrate improved services or tangible outcomes from tenant engagement activities – be that individual, or community based.
- We will be able to publish success stories and positive feedback from tenants (you said, we listened).
- Tenants will have access to digital portals to give and receive feedback. This may include our own website or a hosted site. The measurement of success will be take-up, engagement in projects, or website 'footfall'.
- Streamlined processes, reduced incoming queries – better operational quality will be demonstrable.

Annexe 1: Strategy Action Plan

Priority 1, listening to our tenants.

Create our offer to tenants, our engagement structure.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team, TIG.

Target date

March 2026.

Establish 'outreach' programme or face to face engagement.

Lead officers:

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

March 2025.

Establish protocol for appointment and terms of reference for tenants and governance.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Team.

Target date

March 2025.

Recruitment of 'Involved Tenants'.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Team.

Target date

March 2025.

Creation of panels (such as procurement, complaints, ASB, neighbourhoods)

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

March 2026.

Priority 2, putting tenants first.

Produce a programme of manager and councillor briefings - agree rollout.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

August 2024.

Ongoing – Tenant Engagement Manager update at monthly meetings or toolbox talks.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager

Target date

Ongoing.

Consider and implement Engaged Tenant shadowing opportunities.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

March 2025.

Plan and implement Tenant Engagement Roadshow opportunities with other partners or stakeholders.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

March 2026.

Priority 3, knowing our tenants and supporting engagement.

Initial data review and data collection project to ensure current tenant data is up to date and accurate.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager

Target date

April 2024.

Data review programme - ongoing programme for front line teams and services.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Housing Business and Customer Manager.

Target date

April 2024 and ongoing.

Review and act of feedback – rolling programme.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

Ongoing.

Establish measures for success through feedback.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager

Target date

December 2028.

Priority 4, how we communicate with tenants.

Promote our visibility on estates.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Housing Estates Manager.

Target date

March 2025.

Utilise and report on the success of Citizen Lab.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Greener Housing Manager

Target date

April 2024.

Review and create a Tenant Engagement page on our website and consider increasing social media presence.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

September 2023 and ongoing.

Review Hometalk – ensure relevant.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

Summer 2024.

Create feedback culture – set up pulse surveys for services.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager

Target date

March 2025.

Priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Tenant perception surveys – collection and reporting.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager

Target date

April 2024.

Review new Consumer Standards and complete gap analysis.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, Tenant Engagement Team

Target date

April 2024.

Ensuring scrutiny through involved tenants.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement Manager, heads of service, managers.

Target date

December 2028.

Priorities 1 and 4.

Organise an attractive and fun event(s) to encourage tenants to participate alongside neighbours or fellow tenants and celebrate being a NFDC tenant.

Lead officers

Tenant Engagement team.

Target date

Summer 2025 and potentially ongoing.

CABINET – 7 FEBRUARY 2024

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2024

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the current scheme of members' allowances be made as the scheme to apply from 1 April 2024.
- 1.2 That officers be requested to make the necessary arrangements for a meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel in Autumn this year, to review and make recommendations on the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme in the light of 12 months' operation under the new 48 Member Council structure.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Allowances paid to members of the Council are set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Council is required annually to make a scheme of members' allowances, which must be published. The current scheme is available to view [here](#). The current scheme was adopted in July 2022 following a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

3. CURRENT SCHEME

- 3.1 The current scheme provides for the annual adjustment of allowances (basic, special responsibility and dependant carers' allowances) by the Local Government staff employees' national pay award annual percentage increase.
- 3.2 The employee's national pay award for 2024/25 is still being negotiated. If an award is made it will automatically, under the terms of the Scheme, be backdated to 1 April 2024. No other changes to the scheme are proposed. Indeed, no changes are possible without a recommendation from the Independent Remuneration Panel.

4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL – MEETING IN AUTUMN 2024

- 4.1 When the Council commissioned the current Independent Remuneration Panel in February 2022, arrangements were approved for two reviews of the Council's Members' Allowances scheme; during 2022/23 and from 2024 onwards.
- 4.2 The review from 2024 onwards provides the opportunity to reflect on the commencement of the new, 48 Member Council structure and associated governance arrangements, following the quadrennial District Council elections in May 2023. An Autumn 2024 review provides for a review in light of 12 months of operation under this new structure.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Provision has been made in the draft 2024/25 budget.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The continued adoption of a Members' Allowances Scheme with provision for Parental Leave and a Dependent Carers' Allowance has positive implications by ensuring potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election, taking into account a range of personal circumstances.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The continued adoption of a Members' Allowances Scheme with provision for electric vehicles, bicycles and public transport, promotes the use of sustainable travel for Council business.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER AND DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

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Background Papers:

Published documents
[Cabinet Report – 6 July 2022](#)