



**New Forest**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

---

# Council Meeting Agenda

---

**14 April 2025**





# SUMMONS

To All Members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the District Council to be held in Council Chamber - Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, SO43 7PA on Monday, 14 April 2025 at 6.30 pm



**Kate Ryan**  
Chief Executive

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

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.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. The seating capacity of our Council Chamber public gallery is limited under fire regulations to 22.

Members of the public can watch this meeting live, or the subsequent recording, on the [Council's website](#). Live-streaming and recording of meetings is not a statutory requirement and whilst every endeavour will be made to broadcast our meetings, this cannot be guaranteed. Recordings remain available to view for a minimum of 12 months.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should contact the name and number shown below.

Enquiries to: Matt Wisdom  
Email: [democratic@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@nfdc.gov.uk)  
Tel: 023 8028 5072

---

# AGENDA

## Apologies

### 1. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 44)

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 24 February and 20 March 2025 as correct records.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

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

## **3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **4. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **5. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW (Pages 45 - 86)**

## **6. REPORT OF CABINET - 21 MARCH 2025 (Pages 87 - 92)**

## **7. REPORT OF CABINET - 2 APRIL 2025 (Pages 93 - 262)**

## **8. NOMINATIONS TO THE OFFICES OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

To consider and agree nominations to the Council meeting on 12 May 2025 for election to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council for the following municipal year, in accordance with the Constitution.

The Conservative Group has nominated Cllr Sleep for election to the office of Chairman and Cllr Penny to the office of Vice-Chairman.

The Liberal Democrat Group has nominated Cllr Clark for election to the office of Chairman and Cllr A Wade to the office of Vice-Chairman.

As these positions are contested, secret ballots will be held at the Council meeting.

## **9. QUESTIONS**

To ask questions under Standing Order 22. Questions received will be published ahead of the meeting. (Members are reminded that questions must be submitted to Democratic Services by no later than 12.00 noon, Wednesday 9 April 2025).

## **10. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER**

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Tanya Coulter (Assistant Director – Governance) will leave the Council in May 2025.

Approval is sought to ensure the smooth transition of the Monitoring Officer function.

### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. That Matt Wisdom (currently Service Manager – Democratic and Support Services) be appointed as Monitoring Officer (under a new role: Assistant Director – Strategy & Engagement), with the Monitoring Officer function taking effect from the departure date of the current Monitoring Officer, Tanya Coulter;



2. That the consequential amendments be made throughout the Council's Constitution; and
3. That Council notes the decision of the Chief Executive (as the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer) to appoint the Strategic Director, Corporate Resource & Transformation to undertake the roles of Deputy Returning Officer and Deputy Electoral Registration Officer.

**11. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

To consider any changes to the membership of Committees or Panels that might be proposed by the political groups.

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

This page is intentionally left blank

**24 FEBRUARY 2025**

## **NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 24 February 2025

- \* Cllr David Hawkins (Chairman)
- \* Cllr John Sleep (Vice-Chairman)

### **Councillors:**

John Adams  
\* Alan Alvey  
\* Peter Armstrong  
\* Geoffrey Blunden  
\* Hilary Brand  
\* Mark Clark  
\* Steve Clarke  
\* Jill Cleary  
\* Kate Crisell  
\* Sean Cullen  
\* Jack Davies  
\* Steve Davies  
\* Philip Dowd  
\* Barry Dunning  
Jacqui England  
\* Richard Frampton  
\* Allan Glass  
\* David Harrison  
\* Matthew Hartmann  
\* John Haywood  
Jeremy Heron  
\* Nigel Linford  
\* Patrick Mballa

### **Councillors:**

\* Colm McCarthy  
\* David Millar  
\* Ian Murray  
\* Stephanie Osborne  
Alan O'Sullivan  
Adam Parker  
\* Dave Penny  
\* Neville Penman  
\* Dan Poole  
\* Caroline Rackham  
\* Alvin Reid  
\* Joe Reilly  
\* Janet Richards  
\* Barry Rickman  
Steve Rippon-Swaine  
\* Michael Thierry  
\* Derek Tipp  
\* Neil Tungate  
\* Alex Wade  
\* Malcolm Wade  
\* Christine Ward  
\* Phil Woods  
\* Richard Young

\*Present

### **Officers Attending:**

Kate Ryan, Tanya Coulter, Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Richard Knott, Joanne McClay, Chris Noble, Daniel Reynafarje, Joe Tyler and Matt Wisdom.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs England, Heron, O'Sullivan and Rippon-Swaine.

## **46 MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2024, be confirmed.

**47 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

All Members of the Council had been granted the necessary dispensations to speak and vote on the Scheme of Members' Allowances, the annual budget and setting of the Council tax for 2025/26.

Cllr A Wade declared, for transparency purposes, his employment by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority, a precepting authority in respect of the overall level of Council tax.

Cllr J Davies declared his employment by a taxi operator, subject to the Taxi Policy Review. He confirmed he would not speak, nor vote on the item.

**48 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS****New Councillor Welcome**

The Chairman extended a very warm welcome and offered his congratulations to Councillor Richard Frampton, who was attending his first Full Council meeting, following his election earlier in the month.

**Engagements**

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:-

11 December

The Chairman was delighted to attend the re-opening of Totton Police Station with the Police and Crime Commissioner. He spoke to those in attendance about supporting the police and their role in the community and welcomed the reopening of the station.

25 January

The Chairman represented the District at the Mayor of Gosport's Civic Service at the Freedom Church in Gosport.

6 February

The Board of Trustees of New Forest Disability hosted an event to celebrate lottery grant funding awarded through the access to justice fund, to run a very worthwhile project - Independent Living Through Advice. The Chairman was delighted to attend this event.

**Civic Service**

The Chairman reminded Members of his Civic Service taking place on 23 March and encouraged those Members who had not yet responded to do so, to support the arrangements for this occasion.

**Procedures**

The Chairman confirmed that he intended to take item 14 on the agenda shortly after Leader's Announcements. It was necessary to debate and resolve the motion,

to allow the Council to decide if it wanted to use the electronic voting system for recorded votes on the key budget issues later on the agenda.

As the Council continued to use its electronic voting system, and with a significant amount of business on the agenda, he welcomed Members' support and patience with the smooth running of the meeting.

#### **49 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

The Leader reported that she was actively engaging with the process to establish a Mayoral Strategic Authority, with elections planned for May 2026.

She highlighted that the government had invited local authorities in Hampshire and the Solent to work together on the development of proposals for local government reorganisation. Regardless of the Council's views on reorganisation itself, it was in its interest to engage in this process and achieve the best outcome for local residents and for council staff.

Work collectively with leaders and chief executives across the region had commenced and the Leader had also engaged with the two New Forest MPs.

The Leader confirmed that she would continue to make strong representations for an outcome that was the best fit for the communities of the New Forest. Cabinet would consider a report in March ahead of the government deadline for an interim plan by 21 March 2025.

Alongside this, the Leader was beginning to review priorities, with the aim of delivering a strong legacy across the Council's services and assets. She thanked staff for their unwavering focus on meeting in the needs of residents in uncertain times.

#### **50 NOTICE OF MOTION - ELECTRONIC VOTING**

The Chairman took this item of business ahead of its scheduled place on the agenda, to allow for the Council to decide if it wanted to vote electronically for the purpose of key budget decisions later on the agenda.

The Leader moved the following motion in accordance with Standing Order 21:-

*"This Council notes that:-*

- 1. The Council's Constitution allows for votes by show of hand, and discretionary recorded votes, to be taken by electronic means.*
- 2. The use of electronic voting has been successfully used at recent Council meetings.*
- 3. In order to allow for recorded votes on key budget decisions to be taken electronically, a minor amendment to the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings is required.*

*This Council resolves that:-*

4. *The Council's Standing Orders for Meetings, as contained within the Constitution, be amended as follows with immediate effect:-*

*52A.2 – At the Chairman's discretion, the mode of voting on a matter under 52A.1 shall be by electronic means if available to the Council. The Chairman shall inform the Council if a recorded vote is to be taken electronically, immediately before the vote is taken. Alternatively, where a vote is taken on a matter under 52A.1, each member shall state whether they have voted for the proposition, or against the proposition, or have abstained from voting. The manner in which each member voted shall be recorded in the minutes."*

It was clarified that electronic voting would not replace the use of a secret ballot for contested positions, such as the chairmen and vice-chairman of committees and panels.

The Leader thanked Group Leaders for their support in bringing the motion to Council.

**RESOLVED:**

This Council notes that:-

1. The Council's Constitution allows for votes by show of hand, and discretionary recorded votes, to be taken by electronic means.
2. The use of electronic voting has been successfully used at recent Council meetings.
3. In order to allow for recorded votes on key budget decisions to be taken electronically, a minor amendment to the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings is required.

This Council resolves that:-

4. The Council's Standing Orders for Meetings, as contained within the Constitution, be amended as follows with immediate effect:-

*52A.2 – At the Chairman's discretion, the mode of voting on a matter under 52A.1 shall be by electronic means if available to the Council. The Chairman shall inform the Council if a recorded vote is to be taken electronically, immediately before the vote is taken. Alternatively, where a vote is taken on a matter under 52A.1, each member shall state whether they have voted for the proposition, or against the proposition, or have abstained from voting. The manner in which each member voted shall be recorded in the minutes."*

**51 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26**

Cllr Alvey introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Audit Committee meeting held on 24 January 2025. Cllr Young seconded the motion.

Cllr J Davies placed on record his thanks to the Chairman of the Audit Committee for this work on the strategy and generally, as Cllr J Davies would shortly be leaving the committee.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28 including the Annual Treasury Management Investment Strategy for 2025/26 (and the remainder of 2024/25), and the Treasury Indicators contained within, as provided in Appendix 1 be approved; and
2. That authority is delegated to the Section 151 Officer, who in turn delegates to Hampshire County Council's Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Operations, as agreed in the Service Level Agreement, to manage all Council investments and borrowing according to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement as appropriate.

**52 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2025/26**

Cllr Alvey introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Audit Committee meeting held on 24 January 2025. Cllr Young seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Investment Strategy 2025/26 provided in Appendix 1, be approved.

**53 TAXI POLICY REVIEW**

Cllr J Davies declared his employment by a taxi operator. He confirmed he would not speak, nor vote on this item.

Cllr Tungate introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the General Purposes and Licensing Committee meeting held on 10 January 2025. Cllr Young seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That the revised Taxi Licensing Policy, be approved.

**54 LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26**

Cllr Tungate introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the General Purposes and Licensing Committee meeting held on 10 January 2025. Cllr Young seconded the motion.

Cllr Millar proposed an amendment, specifically in respect of Pavement Licence Renewal Applications, to reduce the £250 charge in the recommendations, to £50. Cllr Harrison seconded the amendment.

Members speaking for the amendment highlighted the debate at the General Purposes and Licensing Committee which considered an amendment to remove the charge altogether. The support provided to local businesses during the pandemic was highlighted, and how it had worked well to ensure the viability of a number of local enterprises. The small number of businesses operating with these

licences was noted, alongside the concern of some Members that the overall costs being faced by businesses, such as national insurance rises, presented real difficulty.

Members speaking against the amendment referred to the framework that a licence provided with a cost recovery charge, to ensure the terms of such a licence were upheld. There were some concerns about waiving costs in one specific area, and how fair this might be considered by those seeking other licensable activities from the Council.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2025–26 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved; and
2. That the power to set the scale of fees and charges for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences, including to consider any objections made in respect of the proposed fees, be delegated to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.

**55 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/26**

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the HR Committee meeting held on 9 January 2025. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26, be approved.

**56 REPORT OF CABINET - 5 FEBRUARY 2025**

**PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET**

**Item 1 – Draft Air Quality Strategy**

One Member welcomed the strategy, but expressed his wish to see more statistics for infant and young people in the district. He hoped that these statistics would be included in future versions to support the strategy's development.

**Item 2 – Housing Landlord Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy**

One Member welcomed the detail of the strategy and hoped that liaison with town and parish councils would be built into its implementation.

**PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

**Item 5 – Financial Monitoring Report**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate, the Leader introduced the item and moved the adoption of the recommendations, to approve



the reallocation of net residual pay award in support of preparations for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council approve the reallocation of the net residual 2024/25 Pay award contingency (£496,000) to create a new £150,000 Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reserve, with the remaining £346,000 being applied to the Council's existing Corporate Priority Reserve.

**Item 6 – Adoption of the revised Statement of Community Involvement**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the report and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council:-

1. notes the outcomes of the public consultation that took place for 6 weeks on the proposed amendments to the SCI and agrees the draft responses to the representations received (set out in Appendix 2);
2. agrees the changes to the SCI set out in Appendix 1 and formally adopts the amended SCI document; and
3. that any final editorial changes to the document prior to publication be agreed by the Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

**Item 7 – Asset Maintenance and Replacement Programme and General Fund Capital Programme 2025/2026**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate, the Leader introduced the item and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Cllr M Wade moved an amendment, to include a modest capital contribution of £60,000, as a contribution to the Hythe Ferry company, towards the repair costs of the pontoon. In support of the amendment, Cllr M Wade spoke of the Hythe Ferry as a heritage asset, its history and role as a key sustainable travel option in the district. Cllr Osborne seconded the amendment.

The Council's Section 151 Officer clarified that the amendment, if carried, would require external borrowing as part of the Council's Capital Strategy.

Members speaking for the amendment highlighted the vital travel service with strong links to key considerations in the Council's local plan preparations. The heritage of the site was reiterated. It was suggested that the Council's contribution could positively lead to matched funding from others.

Members speaking against the amendment, whilst supporting the ferry as a concept, including its heritage, raised concerns about funding the enterprise from the Council's own Capital Programme. It was suggested that grant funding, or community infrastructure levy might be more appropriate funding streams.

Concerns about the sustainability of the ferry service and the cost of effectively maintaining the pontoon and promenade were cited.

Some Members raised concerns of the lateness of the proposed amendment and potential spend of £60,000, welcoming further information from officers at a future date, outlining the implications in full, before considering such a proposal.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, Cllr M Wade highlighted the multimodal transport objectives of the Council that would be enhanced by supporting the ferry. He highlighted that the Hythe Ferry company was sensitive to the need to ensure future sustainability. The positive impact on tourism and businesses were reiterated.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, the Leader was concerned about the future viability of the ferry, and as a non statutory function, she was not supportive of using external borrowing to finance the ferry company through the Council's Capital Programme.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

Members went on to debate the substantive motion further.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the schedule of projects, as included in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 be approved within the 2025/26 budget, noting that this commits the Council to expenditure beyond 2025/26 whereby a project commences in 2025/26 and extends into future years;
2. That the Vehicle and Plant replacement programme be approved for a 2-year period, covering purchases due in 2025/26 and 2026/27;
3. That the Appletree Court scheme previously approved in August 2024 be removed from the Capital Programme, updating the Council's MTFP accordingly and note the new £200,000 allocation for a reduced scope of work in the revised Capital Programme under recommendation 1; and
4. That the intention to create an Asset Management Strategy, be noted.

**Item 8 – Capital Strategy 2025/2026**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate, the Leader introduced the item and moved the recommendations from Cabinet. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

One Member welcomed the revised position in respect of Lymington Town Hall.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Capital Strategy 2025/26 be approved, including the adoption of the Minimum Revenue Payment (MRP) statement.

**Item 9 – Scheme of Members’ Allowances – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and Scheme to apply from 1 April 2025**

The Leader introduced the item and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED:**

That the full recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and the scheme of Members’ Allowances to apply from 1 April 2025, be approved.

**57 REPORT OF CABINET - 19 FEBRUARY 2025****PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET**

There were no items resolved by Cabinet in this report.

**PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL****Item 1 – Housing Revenue Account Budget and Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure Programme 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness introduced the item and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

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

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Armstrong, Blunden, Brand, Clark, Clarke, Cleary, Crisell, Cullen, J Davies, S Davies, Dowd, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Harrison, Hartmann, Hawkins, Haywood, Linford, Mballa, McCarthy, Millar, Murray, Osborne, Penman, Penny, Poole, Rackham, Reid, Reilly, Richards, Rickman, Sleep, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, A Wade, M Wade, Ward, Woods and Young.

Voting against:- None.

Abstaining:- None.

The recommendations were carried, 42 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstaining.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That from 07 April 2025, an increase in dwelling rents of 2.7% from the 2024/25 weekly rent level, in accordance with Government guidelines, be agreed;
2. That from 07 April 2025, an increase in garage rents of 2.7% from the 2024/25 weekly rent level be agreed;
3. That from 07 April 2025, an increase in shared ownership property rents of 3.2% from the 2024/25 weekly rent level, in accordance with Government guidelines of RPI +0.5%, be agreed, and that the weekly rent of one additional property sold under previous legislation be increased by 2.7%;

4. That from 07 April 2025 Service Charges will continue to reflect actual charges and following a reduction in window cleaning and utility costs, these respective charges will be reduced;
5. That the HRA budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report, be agreed; and
6. That a Housing Capital Programme to 2027/28, as set out in Appendix 4 to the Cabinet report, be agreed.

## **Item 2 – Medium Term Financial Plan and Annual Budget 2025/26**

The Chairman used his discretion to allow the Leader of the Council and the leaders of the opposition groups only to exceed the time limit for speeches, for making their budget speeches. He highlighted his intention to attempt to facilitate one budget debate on the recommendations from Cabinet and any single alternative proposal, also at his discretion. However, should more than one amendment be tabled, he indicated that these would be dealt with one at a time, for clarity.

The Leader of the Council introduced the item and moved the recommendations as proposed in the report of the Cabinet dated 19 February 2025. She also made a statement on the budget, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group made a statement and moved an amendment in the form of an alternative budget. Cllr Clark seconded the amendment. A copy of the alternative budget had been circulated to all Members and published as part of the supplementary council agenda. A copy of the statement made is attached to these minutes.

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

Cllr Armstrong moved an amendment, to the fees and charges for beach huts, to charge £185 for a transfer of a licence of a beach hut, on the death of the licence holder. In support of the amendment, Cllr Armstrong considered that the proposed charge within the report of £621.67 was extortionate. He highlighted that in respect of cemeteries, a fee of £185 was used in the event of the transfer of an Exclusive Right of Burial, and this was far more reasonable. Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment.

The Council's Section 151 Officer clarified that the impact of the amendment, although a new fee and therefore not straightforward, was likely to be in the region of £3-4k.

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

Voting for:- Cllrs Armstrong, Brand, Clark, Cullen, J Davies, Harrison, Haywood, Linford, Mballa, McCarthy, Millar, Rackham, Reilly, Richards, A Wade, M Wade and Woods.

Voting against:- Cllrs Alvey, Blunden, Clarke, Cleary, Crisell, S Davies, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Hartmann, Hawkins, Murray, Osborne, Penman, Penny, Poole, Reid, Sleep, Tipp, Tungate and Young.

Abstaining:- Cllrs Dowd, Rickman, Thierry and Ward.

The amendment was lost, 17 in favour, 21 against, 4 abstaining.

The Council further debated the Cabinet's budget proposals together with the alternative budget, before voting on them.

The outcome of the recorded vote on the alternative budget was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Brand, Clark, Cullen, J Davies, Dowd, Harrison, Haywood, Mballa, McCarthy, Millar, Osborne, Rackham, Reilly, A Wade, M Wade and Woods.

Voting against:- Cllrs Alvey, Armstrong, Blunden, Clarke, Cleary, Crisell, S Davies, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Hartmann, Hawkins, Linford, Murray, Penman, Penny, Poole, Reid, Rickman, Sleep, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate Ward and Young.

Abstaining:- Cllr Richards.

The alternative budget was lost, 16 in favour, 25 against, 1 abstaining.

The outcome of the recorded vote on the budget as outlined in the report of Cabinet, was as follows:-

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Armstrong, Blunden, Clarke, Cleary, Crisell, S Davies, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Hartmann, Hawkins, Linford, Murray, Penman, Penny, Poole, Reid, Rickman, Sleep, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, Ward and Young.

Voting against:- Cllrs Brand, Clark, Cullen, J Davies, Dowd, Harrison, Haywood, Mballa, McCarthy, Millar, Osborne, A Wade, M Wade and Woods.

Abstaining:- Cllrs Rackham, Reilly and Richards.

The substantive motion and budget as presented in the report of Cabinet was carried, 25 in favour, 14 against, 3 abstaining.

**RESOLVED:**

1. The updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and financial strategy, as set out in the Cabinet report and throughout appendices 1-3, be approved;
2. there is a General Fund Net Budget Requirement in 2025/26 of £25.509 million, as set out in appendices 5a - 5d to the Cabinet report;
3. the New Forest District Council Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 shall be £205.77 (paragraph 24);
4. the General Fund Capital Programme for 2025/26 of £19.411 million, as set out in appendix 6 to the Cabinet report be approved;
5. the proposed fees and charges as included at appendix 7 to the Cabinet report be approved; and
6. the principal of utilising up to £1.377 million of the budget equalisation reserve to fund investment in community assets, supporting the future

transition to the new unitary authority and town and parish councils, is approved.

## 58 COUNCIL TAX 2025/26

The Council considered the Council Tax for 2025/26.

The Leader moved the recommendations in the report which had been updated and circulated with the supplementary council agenda, following a change in the precept request from New Milton Town Council. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

One Member highlighted the variety of town and parish councils across the District, and hoped that through any local government reorganisation process, that these towns and parishes, and their different needs and requirements would be supported.

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

Voting for:- Cllrs Alvey, Armstrong, Blunden, Brand, Clark, Clarke, Cleary, Crisell, Cullen, J Davies, S Davies, Dowd, Dunning, Frampton, Glass, Harrison, Hartmann, Hawkins, Haywood, Linford, McCarthy, Millar, Murray, Osborne, Penman, Penny, Poole, Rackham, Reid, Reilly, Richards, Rickman, Sleep, Thierry, Tipp, Tungate, A Wade, M Wade, Ward, Woods and Young.

Voting against:- None.

Abstaining:- Cllr Mballa.

The recommendations were carried, 41 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstaining.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the recommendations be approved.

## 59 QUESTIONS

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

- From Cllr Dunning to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on Hurst Spit.
- From Cllr Brand to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on planning enforcement and building control.
- From Cllr J Davies to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on funding for HM Lord Lieutenancy.
- From Cllr Millar to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on CIL under LGR.
- From Cllr Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on the Solent Freeport.
- From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on black bag deliveries.
- From Cllr McCarthy to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on asset transfers to Town and Parish Councils under LGR.

- From Cllr Osborne to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on funding for adult social care.
- From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on development in north Totton.
- From Cllr Mballa to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on the restrictions on disabled bus passes.
- From Cllr Richards to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on the Climate Change Task and Finish Group and Strategy.
- From Cllr Cullen to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on Fawley waterside.

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

## 60 NOTICE OF MOTION - CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr Rackham moved the following motion:-

*“This Council resolves that:-*

- 1. Only those Members who do not belong to the ruling political group shall be eligible for nomination to the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the ordinary committees and panels of the Council; and*
- 2. The consequential amendment to the Council’s Standing Orders for Meetings be made by the Monitoring Officer.”*

Cllr J Davies seconded the motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 42, the Chairman reminded Members that the motion should stand referred to the body within whose terms of reference the subject matter of the motions comes.

In view of an upcoming report to the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Council’s recent corporate peer challenge, the Chairman confirmed that the motion would be referred to the Panel meeting on 20 March 2025.

## 61 ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Council:-

1. Having considered the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, agrees to the allocation set out in the table in Appendix 1; and
2. appoints councillors to individual committees and panels, as identified in Appendix 2, for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2027.

CHAIRMAN



Chairman, it takes a lot of time, thought and effort to produce a sound balanced budget that seeks to prioritise the funding we have available to the highest priority areas as outlined in the Council's adopted corporate plan.

There are also several hurdles along the way that we have to contend with. In December we found out that the provisional finance settlement for 2025/26 had reduced our expected level of government backed funding by nearly half a million pounds. Then of course the white paper released on December the sixteenth cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of Local Government in England. In January through the final finance settlement, only then did we receive notice that the employer national insurance grant was only going to cover 25% of our forecast increased cost; another shortfall of around half a million pounds.

As a long-standing Conservative administration however, we are well versed in these challenges, and because of our prudent and sensible approach to financial management, we are able to weather these storms, and still produce a balanced budget that continues to invest in the services that we deliver for our residents.

Lets be clear, it is no mean feat to produce a balanced budget that includes an additional two point three million pounds within the revenue budget, and eight million pounds within the capital programme to deliver a new, modern waste service. A new service that will encourage households to produce less waste, and recycle more. This significant level of investment, on top of the eight million pounds spent over the last 14 months on our fantastic new depot facility in Hardley, shoring up our ability to provide a vital front facing service for several years to come.

The recent corporate peer challenge that was undertaken at the Council gave us really helpful feedback that our corporate plan was well prepared with an ambitious vision, and well communicated. It did however also recommend that we reflect on capacity and prioritise clearly. We need to be sensible about what we can realistically achieve and deliver in the space of a financial year and medium-term budget cycle.

I therefore have three main priorities to deliver over the next financial year; Council transformation, the delivery of the new waste service, and the investment in community based assets.

The budget continues to prioritise investment in our Council wide transformation programme, despite it being unlikely that we'll have the time to see through the delivery of all the savings initially targeted

through the original business case. We are very much full steam ahead in terms of still seeking to deliver modern digital platforms that will improve our residents and customers ability to self-serve, and more easily transact with the Council at a time that suits them.

The significant upgrade to our waste collection service, including for the first time the separate collection of food waste is the single largest whole system change that we will have seen at this Council for decades. The budget provides the necessary funding required to roll-out our new waste service, which will be a truly mammoth undertaking over the next twelve months.

I have also reflected on the position that the devolution White paper leaves us with. It would be financially irresponsible of us to not think ahead to how we can best support the new local authority that will continue to serve the New Forest residents. I have therefore set aside some funding to invest in specific and necessary local government reorganisation resource, and have prioritised one point four million pounds of residual funding we have available from our budget equalisation reserve to enable investment in our community assets. The programme will require important discussions with Town and Parish councils to secure local services at a local level.

Of course there are several other matters that continue within our budget plans, aligned to the Corporate Plan; the budget includes the additional forty thousand pounds I pledged last year to increase the amount that this Council can put into the community grants programme. Thanks to the cross-party work of the task and finish group and overview and scrutiny panel, we have awarded grants in the 2025/26 financial year totalling three hundred and twenty three thousand pounds, including an increase to individual councillor grants from six hundred pounds to one thousand pounds. I implore all councillors in this chamber to utilise this funding to maximum effect, and support the initiatives and projects in your respective areas that have the widest reach to your constituents.

The budget also includes in excess of eleven million pounds over the next three years on CIL funded project delivery. Projects will result in improvements to our town centres, coastal destinations, open spaces, community halls, sports halls, footpaths and highways across the district. This is another commitment from the Conservative administration to ensure our new forest community see the direct benefit from developer funded CIL contributions.

Our Housing budget for 2025/26 allows for over thirteen and a half million pounds of maintenance expenditure to our 5,250 properties; an increase of two point eight million in comparison to 2024/25. We are accelerating our maintenance programme over the next few years to the significant benefit of our tenants. These programmes will continue to improve energy efficiency, and further improve the quality of the homes we provide through enhanced kitchen, bathroom, doors, windows and boiler replacement programmes. In addition, we have set aside budget of over forty five million pounds to spend on new homes over the next 3 years. If we could deliver more, then trust me, we would, but we have to be realistic about the availability of local housing supply, and be sensible about the number of opportunities we can take forward within the next 3 years considering the Local Government Reorganisation framework.

I won't shy away from having to make sure our housing rents track inflation, and that our fees and charges remain carefully benchmarked and reflective of increased service delivery costs. This is why I endorse the range of increases as set out within the budget report.

As an administration, we have proposed an increase to the New Forest District Council precept of five pounds and ninety eight pence for the year. A precept amount which often gets lost amongst the overall bill which of course includes the council tax precept from the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire Rescue service, and the local town and parish council. We can only control our part, and I think to do all that we do for a band D council tax for the year of two hundred and five pounds and seventy seven pence I believe represents excellent value.

The fully-funded and balanced Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Budgets both remain ambitious, but are achievable. They are well thought through and considered, and enable us to prioritise what we can reasonably deliver on areas that will make the biggest impact to the largest number of our residents.

My special thanks go to our wonderful staff at the Council who continue to provide such excellent services, and to my Cabinet colleagues for their work and input into this difficult and challenging budget process.

Chairman, I fully endorse the recommendations as laid out in the report of the Cabinet.

This page is intentionally left blank

Members we stand at the threshold of the most pivotal change in local governance in our lifetimes. The transition to a unitary authority is not just an administrative change, it is a fundamental shift in how we deliver services, allocate resources, and define the priorities that will shape our communities for years to come. This is not about party politics; this is about leadership, vision, responsibility and accountability to the people we serve. The decisions we make now will echo into the future, and we cannot afford for their sakes to let this moment pass without action. The Conservative administration has been cautious with finances, and while fiscal prudence is important, there is a difference between being cautious and being unprepared. When we move into unitary governance, decisions will be made about priorities and services for the New Forest area, which will no longer be made in this chamber and debated by its members. If we do not act now to set the agenda for investment in our district, we risk being overlooked when resources are redistributed across a much larger population. The new authority will not inherit just our budgets, it will inherit our priorities. We must make those priorities clear now for the residents of our district.

We can work to make the transition to unitary government an opportunity if we use it wisely. The councils that take the lead in setting up pilot programs, proving feasibility, and demonstrating community impact will be the ones that shape the policies of the new authority. If we do nothing, our local priorities risk being lost. But if we lead now, our district can be at the forefront of shaping the policies and investments of the unitary government from day one.

This is the focus in our budget, to improve wellbeing across the district, support local businesses and help those that need assistance. We want to encourage green initiatives and enhance our communities' environments.

Liberal Democrats want to support local businesses more. We propose NFDC refocusing its commercial strategy to promote multi-purpose units in our main settlements with facilities including superfast broadband, office space at a reasonable rent and extended business rate relief to encourage the purchase and use of empty shops. Economic resilience is not something that happens by accident, it is the result of planning, innovation, and forward-thinking policy. NFDC to allocate resources to produce a Digital Economy Strategy for the district so we can benefit from the business and art opportunities it would bring to our area.

Encourage Green Energy production with Business rate relief incentives. Ensure the New Forest is ready to compete in this new environment. Let us not forget Tourism is a corner stone of the district's local economy we

propose looking at innovative ways to support tourism like a self-funding Tourist App high lighting the many tourist venues and experiences in our area.

The economic landscape of the New Forest is changing, and with the shift to a unitary authority, we must ensure that there is access to digital infrastructure, flexible workspaces. Delivering a level of support to promote current and future growth.

We want to improve access to art and culture in our communities to help wellbeing by creating Arts Hub/Creative spaces and include a transient art and culture hub such as an arts bus, to move around the district. In addition, formalising the Arts Advocate scheme to have a representative in each community with local arts and performance venue representation.

We have an aging population with 29.8% over the age of 65, many of which are much older and need to be able to get to health centres if they cannot drive but we have no practical public transport links to Lymington or Southampton hospitals .So we propose working in partnership with Towns and Parish Council to provide a "health bus service" to Lymington/Southampton hospitals. NFDC to provide the seed capital of £50k to purchase the first bus and work with local councils to produce sustainable revenue costs plan to be funded by T&P's councils thereafter.

We want to help our youth too supporting them develop into the citizens of the New Forest of tomorrow, by setting up Youth Hubs, engaging with HCC and other partners to provide funding for more youth and family hubs, focusing on school holidays, with meal and activity funding throughout District.

In the 23/24 figures, amongst our New Forest school age children there are 20.4% on free school meals compared to 19.4% across the county and 19.7% across the Southeast region. These figures equate to 4250 children being in poverty. This has risen by 224 children since I brought this to the council's attention last year and the Conservative admiration did not respond. Since 2021 the number of children in poverty in our district has grown by 802, We can still make a difference and prevent further growth in child poverty because the Liberal Democrats propose NFDC working with other agencies such as HCC,CAB, the Food Foundation The Handy Trust and other local charities providing a grant contribution of £500,000 aimed at stopping the increase and reducing child poverty in the New Forest District (£250k over two years).

Strong communities are built on stability. When families struggle with poverty, when young people lack opportunities, and when older residents cannot access health services, the cost is not just social, it is economic. These pressures translate into increased demand for services, lower workforce participation, and a reduced quality of life that affects everyone. Our proposals are more than just supporting the vulnerable; they are about making smart, proactive investments that reduce long-term costs and create a more resilient, self-sufficient community.

In the last election we reduced our number of councillors from 60 to 48 saving allowances, expenses and community grant funding. Hampshire County Council has its own councillor community grant scheme on hold pending a review. So many local organisations will lose out on this vital source of funding, so we propose an enhanced budget for NFDC Councillor community grants to be raised to £1200 per member.

Housing and Homelessness issues should not be as high as they are in our district, with a large number of New Forest families on the Housing waiting list. Therefore, Liberal Democrats propose to raise the Housing acquisition budget. to £50m over 3 years, from the administrations £45m per year.

We have only to watch the news to see the impact of climate change getting worse. We never want to see New Forest residents becoming the victims of nature. We need to continue to act for future generations of New Forest residents. We propose a feasibility study into turning sections of NFDC car parks into covered solar panelled parking bays to generate electricity for charging electric vehicles selling the excess power to subsidise carparking costs. Another step by this council of cost-effective green actions towards a more economically sustainable environmental future.

Many of our areas suffer from fly tipping and whilst the campaign by the Liberal Democrats to save the Hampshire County Council Recycling Centres drew cross party support to keep them open. We need to plan for the future, the outcomes of the local government organisation is unclear. We need measures to protect our communities from increased fly tipping and a strategy to deal with side waste, the excess waste, which will not go in the wheelie bin. Therefore we propose having Community skips in our main communities as have been successfully introduced in other councils for excess waste, side waste and a legal alternative to fly tipping.

The Liberal Democrats are committed to democracy and listening to our residents not just through surveys, but by engagement to really hear

what they want us to do. Our district, the geographically largest in the county, contains diverse communities, where one size solutions do not fit it all. We propose following the successful introduction across the country in many local authorities the setting up of Citizen Assemblies, asking participants to look at 3 key topics each year, all relevant to the New Forest District and the communities we serve.

None of our proposals negatively impacts the council's finances or the medium-term financial plan. To reassure members on the financial aspects of this budget they will be paid for using £1.079m of the revenue budget, which was going to be transferred into the Capital Budget. In the officer's report it states, "The level of additional borrowing required to backfill the capital programme financing would not be at a level that would likely cause a significant detrimental short-, medium- or long-term effect." It is also worth remembering over the last 8 years every year but one have had significant underspends along with sums of extra money from the government/interest rates improvements etc, in the last budget outturn 23/24 the unbudgeted income amounted to £3.52m. Our Capital spend of that year was a final spend of £8 million from a 15 then 13 million spend plan leaving £4.693 million rephased into future years man and savings of £1, 029 million. So financially we are able to make these improvements.

We as councillors are elected not only to represent our residents but to work to improve their quality of life and to make our district a great and safe place to live, work and visit.

The challenge we face is bigger than any one council, any one budget, or any one political party. We are making decisions today that will shape future of governance of the New Forest. If we do not act now, if we do not set clear priorities, secure funding, and establish a framework for the new authority then those decisions will be made for us, without us. We choose to lead by putting together a budget that helps fortify our district for the governance challenges ahead and improve things for New Forest Residents.



## **Council – 24 February 2025 – Questions Under Standing Order 22**

### **Question 1**

#### **From Cllr Barry Dunning to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden**

Can the PH for Environment and Sustainability please update members on any impacts of the January 2025 storms to Hurst Spit and of any plans for NFDC to undertake any necessary maintenance works.

*Reply:*

*Our coastline was affected by two named storms towards the end of January. The 27<sup>th</sup> January storm was slow moving and sustained Hurst Spit and other coastal areas to a prolonged period of damaging waves.*

*Once conditions allowed, post-storm inspections and surveys were undertaken by our coastal team who I would thank for their immense efforts over the last month.*

*Initial inspections show that a length of approximately 400m of Hurst Spit was damaged, with a general reduction in crest width from around 12m, down to 1m in the most affected sections. This means that there is no longer vehicle access for operational purposes for those managing Hurst Castle.*

*With regard to undertaking any works to repair the Spit I can confirm that NFDC has no plans to currently undertake any works to restore Hurst Spit to its condition prior to the storm impacts.*

*NFDC has no land ownership responsibility for Hurst Spit, or any operational responsibility. Land ownership for the main body of the spit is shared across a number of organisations and private individuals.*

*The current position on not undertaking maintenance and repair work is due to the funding constraints of there being no external funding to support any works. Due to the limited property flood risk there is no available funding through the flood and coastal erosion risk management route of grant in aid. Along with this, those organisations and stakeholders that own or have an operational interest in Hurst Spit have declined to provide any supporting funding to enable works to take place.*

*It should also be noted that even if funding became available that assent would be required from Natural England to enable any works progression. And I would add that there is no legal duty on NFDC to undertake flood and coastal erosion risk management activities at Hurst Spit or for any other areas of the New Forest coastline. The powers to act are purely permissive.*

*There has been no change to NFDC's policy on managing Hurst Spit and undertaking associated maintenance works. We will continue to do so if the following applies:*

- Funding is available either through central government grant or contributions to support required works; and*
- Works are required to protect against flood and erosion risk. Note - NFDC will not undertake works to enable vehicle or pedestrian access along the Spit; and*
- Appropriate assents and licences are in place to enable works to progress, including Natural England assent (to work within a site of special scientific interest, (SSSI).*

*Should the member wish to further understand the past management of Hurst Spit I would suggest a review of the recent PH decision paper.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on a lack of funding, the Portfolio Holder agreed to attend a meeting of a campaign group called 'Save Lymington and Keyhaven' to understand ongoing concerns. In the meantime, the Portfolio Holder would be writing to the Secretary of State to express his concerns over the lack of funding.*

## **Question 2**

### **From Cllr Hilary Brand to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

During the Planning Committee in January, it became apparent that building regulations visits and enforcement are not being carried out as effectively as they should. Please can you let us know how many Enforcement Officers and Building Reg Inspectors did we have six months ago, how many do we have now and is this enough for NFDC to be effective?

*Reply:*

*The Planning Enforcement team consists of three enforcement officers and one team leader. The Building Control team consists of six inspectors,*

*three trainees and a team leader. There have been no changes in personnel over the last six months and both teams are fully staffed. Both services are subject to significant regulation and the Building Control service is currently the subject of a planned audit by the Building Safety Regulator.*

*I do believe that we give a good, effective service with existing staffing levels. It is important to realise that not every construction site in the New Forest uses our Building Control service, with there being a significant private sector presence for many sites. With privately employed inspectors providing a competing service.*

*There have been recent occasions where development sites have initially used privately employed inspectors who, have then ceased trading whilst the development is being constructed. On such occasions, the application reverts back to the local authority's building control service, who will take swift action to assess the works on site and ensure that subsequent construction meets the relevant regulations and standards required, including consultation with other bodies where required.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on what influence the Council has on third party building control, the Portfolio Holder stated that ultimately, private businesses should uphold the required standards and the Council could only intervene when concerns were discovered. He offered to arrange a meeting with Cllr Brand and a senior officer to discuss the matter further.*

### **Question 3**

#### **From Cllr Jack Davies to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary**

I hope the Leader was as shocked as I was when it was revealed that, despite being on the verge of bankruptcy, Hampshire County Council still pays for the King's official representative in Hampshire – the Lord Lieutenant – to the tune of £130,000 a year. Does the Leader agree with me that the King should pay for his own Lord-Lieutenant, not the hard-up taxpayers of Hampshire?

*Reply:*

*I believe that the value of the Lord-Lieutenant is well recognised as part of our historic civic arrangements across the county. I understand that every aspect of the county council budget has been looked at rigorously*

*through the budget-setting process and as such it is not for me to comment on the future funding for this role.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question which invited the Leader to write to HM the King on this matter, she declined to do so, highlighting that this was for Hampshire County Council to consider.*

#### **Question 4**

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

With unitary authorities due to be established in the next couple of years, and with them the end of New Forest District Council as a legal entity, what reassurance can we give our residents that the funds this council has received under the Community Infrastructure Levy – totalling many millions of pounds – will be spent in the New Forest, for the benefit of New Forest residents, once the spending decision passes to another authority?

*Reply:*

*As you have already heard tonight, the Leader of this Council has already reiterated our commitment to ensure that the interests of our communities are placed at the heart of discussions about future local government reorganisation. Until we hear otherwise, this Council will continue to lead our communities in delivering high quality services across its areas of responsibilities, including the collection and expenditure of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The framework for allocating the expenditure of these funds is well established through an Expenditure Framework which was last revised in October 2024 by this Council. As outlined in the Leader's speech tonight, the proposed capital programme budget for 2025/26 - 2027/28 includes Developer Contributions (£106) and CIL funded projects of over £11 million. Further work will be undertaken next year to ensure the Council continues to facilitate the delivery of projects using the funding it collects for this purpose.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on the timing for passing on funding through local government reorganisation, the Portfolio Holder highlighted that it was too early to foresee any potential timing of reorganisation and therefore it would be unfair to speculate on this issue.*

## Question 5

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

The Leader of this Council has been an outspoken advocate for Freeports, championing their widely touted economic benefits. However, at the recent Waterside Vision event, the CEO of the Freeports acknowledged that any tangible gains may not materialize for another 25 years—another case of economic transformation forever on the horizon, yet to be realized.

Meanwhile, the gravitational pull of the Freeports threatens to accelerate the fragmentation of the New Forest's existing structure, drawing the Waterside ever closer to Southampton's economic and political sphere. Given that devolutionary shifts may see these assets siphoned away, can she outline the concrete mechanisms she has secured to ensure that any future prosperity remains within the New Forest?

*Reply:*

*I have to say, I am disappointed that the tone of the contributions from the opposition is sinking so low, and I really hope you reflect on the impact some may feel from your wording.*

*I was pleased that Cllr Clark and a number of other councillors present here today were able to attend the recent Waterside Vision event. An event where a number of landowners, key businesses and voluntary and community representatives came together to receive updates on the progress being made on work across the Waterside and to discuss how we can continue to work collaboratively to maximise the potential of the Waterside in the best interests of our communities.*

*Clearly, Cllr Clark and I have a very different recollection of the event and indeed what the purpose of our work on the Waterside, and the designation of the Freeport is trying to achieve. To state that the CEO of the Freeport company warned, that any tangible gains might not arise on the waterside within the next 25 years is plainly false. Indeed, we know that there are key projects already being delivered at Solent Gateway in Marchwood and through the FAST project at Exxon Mobil.*

*That's not to belie the challenges ahead as we seek to bring forward the wider opportunities across the Waterside and the associated economic, social and environmental benefits that it can bring. Members will recall that the key priorities of this Council were agreed in April of last year*

*across a series of themes ranging from transport/wider infrastructure, Employment and Skills, Prosperous Communities and Environmental Sustainability and the development of a Local Delivery Plan. Work is now underway to develop these themes into a clear proposition within the New Forest Freeport Delivery Plan which will be subject to Member scrutiny and consideration in due course.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on the concerns over securing the future benefits in the New Forest area, the Leader stated that she did not agree with the councillor's view on this issue.*

## **Question 6**

### **From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden**

In the past couple of months I have had more queries on bin bag deliveries than almost any other issue. Can the Portfolio Holder reassure Residents living in Totton and the Waterside, who are in Phase 3 of the change over to Wheelie Bins, and therefore will be using bin bags for 12 months, that any remaining deliveries of black and recycling bags are delivered on time, any delays are communicated much clearer, and resilience plans are in place to reduce impact on our residents?

*Reply:*

*I am pleased to say that sack deliveries are currently running according to schedule.*

*In the last quarter of 2024, higher than usual staff sickness led to the service making a choice between delivering sacks and running core waste collections. Of course we prioritised the collection of waste and recycling from our residents, and this led to some delays in getting sacks out to residents in some areas. As soon as available, additional resources were deployed to clear the backlog of deliveries, and this situation has now been recovered, with deliveries being back on schedule.*

*This information was available to residents on our website, specifically on the sack deliveries webpage, and the Customer Service Team were provided with a brief to manage queries from our residents. The resource and cost associated with the delivery of sacks is one of the reasons why this Council is modernising its services in 2025 and 2026 via the rollout of wheeled bins and a new food waste recycling service, which will also significantly improve our recycling performance.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on the information made available to the customer service team, the Portfolio Holder felt that the team handled these issues well and provided accurate information to residents.*

## **Question 7**

### **From Cllr Colm McCarthy to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

As this lame duck administration limps rapidly towards its own demise, by what criteria will assets be handed over to Town and Parish Councils for their continued management and what is the time scale?

*Reply:*

*Firstly Cllr McCarthy, we are not a lame duck, and we are not going to limp anywhere. We have always been a strong council, and we will continue to be a strong council until the last day of existence in our current form.*

*In terms of your question, officers are currently in the process of drafting an asset strategy, which will reflect the Local Government Reorganisation context. That document, which I am expecting to see finalised later in the Spring, will set out a policy position to include the appropriate process that we will follow to determine which assets may suit transferring and / or may suit alternative management going forwards. That formalised process will consider the appropriate assessment criteria and will set out a likely timescale for this as a significant project. We will also need to take steps to set up the appropriate channels for dialogue with our Town and Parish Councils and potentially the broader community sector. This all needs setting out in a structured way, and resourcing effectively to ensure we achieve the best outcome for our residents. Our commitment of £1.4 m in the budget to support this process is a clear sign that we intend to deliver on this as a priority action whilst we still exist as New Forest District Council.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on the approach to Town and Parish Councils on these matters, the Leader confirmed it would be a consultative process.*

## **Question 8**

### **From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

It's no secret the New Forest has one of the largest elderly populations of anywhere in the country. This puts us in a weak position during local government reorganisation because nobody wants to fund the cost of providing social care in the New Forest.

The truth of the matter is that social care shouldn't be a postcode lottery. Instead of being funded through council tax, it should be funded by central taxation. Does the Leader agree? If so, will she write to Government calling for social care to be funded through central government taxation, not through local council tax?

*Reply:*

*The Government states that local government reorganisation is designed to create simpler more sustainable councils. Within this the demographics of the New Forest is only one aspect for consideration. We believe our communities, our businesses and our council will be a strong contributor to any future unitary council.*

*With the Commission on Adult Social Care reform chaired by Dame Louise Casey just launched I do not think it is sensible to jump to a conclusion as to the correct solution, and I will therefore not be writing to the government on this matter, which is outside our current remit.*

*Note – in response to a supplementary question on securing good social care in the New Forest through local government reorganisation, the Leader felt that this was a matter for new unitary authorities to consider.*

## **Question 9**

### **From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

Some years ago in Totton we were given the assurance that there would be a structured plan of the development in North Totton, across the entire site. Those plans seem to have dissipated as development has taken place in a piecemeal way so I wonder what assurances there may be that plans for future developments will be enforced?



*Reply:*

*Cllr Rackham is correct that in allocating land for development at North Totton (Policy SS1 of the adopted Local Plan) there was a recognised objective for the different landowners to come together and prepare a comprehensive development framework for the entire allocation. This was identified in order to ensure delivery of an integrated, whole site, approach to the provision of routes across it, the mix of uses and facilities and spread of green space. However, since the adoption of the Local Plan it has not been possible to bring the landowners together to secure such a development framework for the comprehensive development of the entire site.*

*The absence of such a framework cannot preclude the duty that the Council, in its role as Local Planning Authority (LPA), has to determine planning applications made to it based on the overall merits of the proposal.*

*Note – this question was dealt with in writing as it fell outside the 30 minute time limit at the meeting.*

## **Question 10**

### **From Cllr Patrick Mballa to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary**

Does the Leader agree with me that restrictions on disabled bus passes introduced by her fellow Conservatives on Hampshire County Council will have a disproportionate impact on people in the New Forest because of our rural nature?

*Reply:*

*Whilst I would prefer County Councillors not to have to make any decision that has a negative impact to any resident of the New Forest, I do understand that the financial challenges faced by Hampshire county council have led to some very difficult decisions having to be taken.*

*In terms of this particular decision, I have to trust that the County Council have carried out an appropriate equality impact assessment, and I'm sure will not have taken the decision lightly. I would encourage any resident who has been adversely impacted to contact their county councillor, who can make the appropriate representation at the County Council.*

*Note – this question was dealt with in writing as it fell outside the 30 minute time limit at the meeting.*

## Question 11

### **From Cllr Janet Richards to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden**

In response to a motion originally put to this Council on 13th May last year, regarding measurement of the Council's carbon emissions, the Council agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to consider this.

The Climate Change and Nature Emergency Annual Update report approved by Cabinet on 2nd October clarified that a Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy was currently being drafted and would be informed by the Task and Finish Group which would explore the issues over a 12-month period, starting in Autumn 2024.

Since the Task and Finish Group is yet to be set up, please could you tell me the reason for the delay and clarify the latest timescale for the commencement of the Task and Finish Group and for the completion of the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy?

*Reply:*

*Given the breadth of scope and complex nature of the subject matter, careful consideration has been given to the format and content of both the Task and Finish Group sessions and the background information, to ensure that Members are well informed and able to maximise the value of the group discussions.*

*Consultation on key issues and opportunities has been undertaken at an officer level, and a draft climate change adaptation report has been created to provide a clear understanding of the expected impacts and key hazards for the New Forest District, helping to inform future priorities. This report will be discussed at the next Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13th March.*

*These extensive preparations have taken more time than initially envisaged; however I feel that the sessions will be better as a result. Can I ask that colleagues with an interest in sitting on this Task and Finish Group make themselves aware to Democratic Services when volunteers are shortly invited, so that we can commence as soon as possible after the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting.*

*Note – this question was dealt with in writing as it fell outside the 30 minute time limit at the meeting.*

## Question 12

### **From Cllr Sean Cullen to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp**

Retrospective permission has been given to use the important Fawley site for storage and not for housing for approximately a year. Can NFDC guarantee that this is only a temporary measure and that the site will return to housing use as previously stated?

*Reply:*

*As Cllr Cullen will be aware, there are currently three temporary planning consents for a variety of commercial activities within the Fawley Waterside site. Whether applications are made to extend these temporary planning consents beyond their current time limits is ultimately for the landowners to decide and this Council will consider any such applications on their merits.*

*Whilst the site is allocated in the current Local Plan for a residential led-development, it has never been used for housing and the viability challenges of delivering housing on this site are well known. The landowners of the site are beginning to undertake work to identify a new, longer term future for the site, alongside the preparation of our Local Plan Review. My officers will continue to proactively engage with landowners in this work, engaging with local communities as appropriate.*

*Note – this question was dealt with in writing as it fell outside of the 30 minute time limit at the meeting.*

This page is intentionally left blank

**20 MARCH 2025**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Special meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Thursday,  
20 March 2025

- \* Cllr David Hawkins (Chairman)
- \* Cllr John Sleep (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

John Adams  
\* Alan Alvey  
\* Peter Armstrong  
\* Geoffrey Blunden  
\* Hilary Brand  
\* Mark Clark  
\* Steve Clarke  
\* Jill Cleary  
\* Kate Crisell  
Sean Cullen  
\* Jack Davies  
\* Steve Davies  
Philip Dowd  
\* Barry Dunning  
\* Jacqui England  
Richard Frampton  
\* Allan Glass  
\* David Harrison  
Matthew Hartmann  
John Haywood  
\* Jeremy Heron  
Nigel Linford  
Patrick Mballa

**Councillors:**

\* Colm McCarthy  
\* David Millar  
\* Ian Murray  
\* Stephanie Osborne  
\* Alan O'Sullivan  
\* Adam Parker  
\* Dave Penny  
\* Neville Penman  
\* Dan Poole  
Caroline Rackham  
\* Alvin Reid  
\* Joe Reilly  
Janet Richards  
\* Barry Rickman  
\* Steve Rippon-Swaine  
Michael Thierry  
\* Derek Tipp  
\* Neil Tungate  
\* Alex Wade  
\* Malcolm Wade  
\* Christine Ward  
\* Phil Woods  
\* Richard Young

\*Present

**Officers Attending:**

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, Tanya Coulter, Daniel Reynafarje and Matt Wisdom

**Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Cullen, Dowd, Frampton, Haywood, Linford, Rackham, Richards and Thierry.

**62 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that she had granted a dispensation to all Members of the Council to speak and vote on the report and recommendations at minute 63 below, in respect of local government reorganisation. This was because it could be argued that Members could have a disclosable pecuniary interest in potential local government reorganisation, by virtue of their receipt of a Members' allowance as a Member of New Forest District Council.

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

### **63 DEVOLUTION UPDATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION INTERIM PLAN**

The Chairman confirmed that he had called the meeting to meet the deadline set by the Government for the submission of an interim plan for local government reorganisation proposals for Hampshire and the Solent.

The recommendations were in two parts. Part one dealt with an update on Devolution and the Council's response to the Government consultation, which was for Council to determine. Part two outlined recommendations that Cabinet would consider at its Special Meeting on 21 March 2025. Council, through the course of debate and in passing any specific resolutions, was asked to advise the Cabinet in respect of those recommendations.

The Leader introduced the report and moved the adoption of the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

In moving the recommendations, the Leader referred to the work undertaken by all political groups across the Council and thanked Members for their collaboration. She expressed that despite it not being the Council's priority to pursue local government reorganisation, it was imperative to ensure that work with all councils in Hampshire was collaborative, to secure the very best advantage to continue to make a difference for the good, not only for the New Forest but for the Council's staff and all residents.

Taking Members through the report, she also thanked the Chief Executive and senior officers for their work to date and concluded by reiterating her top priority was to secure the best future for the unique and special place of the New Forest.

The Chairman referred to the advance notice of a number of amendments and proposals and confirmed that he would ask the Council to consider these each in turn first as amendments, in order to then move on to the substantive debate on local government reorganisation.

#### Amendment 1

Cllr Brand moved an amendment to recommendation 1(b), to read "that the Council delegates authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with all Political Group Leaders to respond to the Government consultation on the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority." Cllr Woods seconded the amendment.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

#### Amendment 2

Cllr Armstrong moved a proposal which read "It is the Council's view that, Cabinet recommendation 2(b) should be amended as follows:- Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with all Political Group Leaders to approve the final interim submission on behalf of the Council, in the event that minor amendments are agreed by the 15 councils." Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment.

Put to the vote, the proposal was lost.

#### Amendment 3

Cllr M Wade moved a proposal which read “It is the Council’s view that, Cabinet recommendations 2(c) should be amended as follows:- Cabinet consider key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and communities of the New Forest.” Cllr Cleary seconded the amendment.

Put to the vote, the proposal was carried.

#### Amendment 4

Cllr J Davies moved a proposal which read “It is the Council’s view that, Cabinet recommendation 2(e) should be amended as follows:- Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and with all Political Group Leaders, to access and spend funds from the Council’s Devolution and LGR Reserve.” Cllr McCarthy seconded the proposal.

Put to the vote, the proposal was lost.

The Council went on to debate the substantive motion and advise the Cabinet of its views, which included the following key points:-

- Members did not feel that Local government reorganisation would benefit the residents of the New Forest and outlined that representations had been made to them from residents about the loss of the council and a fear of losing local services.
- Concerns were raised that instead of focusing on the delivery of services to New Forest residents, Council time and resources would be diverted into reorganisation.
- There was total opposition to any proposal which split the New Forest community through boundary changes.
- There was a concern that if the waterside area was subsumed into a ‘Greater Southampton’, the remainder of the New Forest had not been considered.
- There was consensus across the Council that Members should work together to develop proposals urgently, that work across Hampshire and the Solent, and that keep the New Forest together.
- Members referred to the New Forest’s unique market town and village economy, which was noted as being rural in its nature. This included a coherent historic identity, focused on the forest. This was not considered to be compatible with an urban economic geography.
- Concerns were raised that by splitting the New Forest waterside away from the remaining district, both parts of the district would be disadvantaged.
- Members referenced the unique partnership arrangements in the New Forest including the National Park Authority, Verderers Court, Commoners, and the 37 Town and Parish Councils that form the building blocks of the local New Forest communities. It was noted that areas that do not have Town and Parish Councils have very different community governance arrangements that may not align with the New Forest.

- The long term funding of adult social care was of concern to Members, including the viability of future unitary councils and the fact that district and borough councils have an excellent track record in delivering statutory and community based services, that serve the needs of residents at a local level.
- The point was made that reorganisation would not resolve the funding challenges faced by authorities with responsibility for adults and children's services.

The Chairman, and the Leader thanked Members for their contributions to the debate which would guide the Cabinet's consideration of the matter.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council:-

- a) notes the Government's decision to include Hampshire and the Solent on its Devolution Priority Programme, leading to the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority in May 2026; and
- b) Delegates authority to the Leader of the Council to respond to the Government consultation on the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority, on behalf of the Council.

2. It is the Council's view that:-

- a) Cabinet recommendation 2(c) should be amended as follows:-  
Cabinet consider key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and communities of the New Forest.

CHAIRMAN



**Council – 14 April 2025**

## **Financial Regulations Review**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report sets out to Council the proposed revisions to the council's financial regulations.
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p><b>It is recommended that Council approve:</b></p> <p><b>1) the updated Financial Regulations, as set out in the report and in appendices 1-3, are approved.</b></p> <p><b>2) the consequential changes to align the Contract Standing Orders (CSO) thresholds as set out in appendix 4.</b></p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The council's financial regulations should be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the current policy and practice required by the Council, including due regard to the current organisational structure.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	<p>Paul Whittles</p> <p>Assistant Director – Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer)</p> <p>02380 285766</p> <p><a href="mailto:paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk">paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

### **Introduction and background**

1. The Council's Financial Regulations need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the current policy and practise required by the Council, including due regard to the current organisational structure.

2. The last review by Audit Committee was 22 March 2024 and included updates regarding the new Assistant Director positions and thresholds, with the changes being fully adopted by Council at the 8 April 2024 meeting. The latest proposals were considered by Audit Committee at the 21 March 2025 meeting and were agreed as being recommended for approval by Council.
3. Up-to-date Financial Regulations support the Section 151 Officer in directing the Council's financial affairs and ensure the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Council. They are also another central point of reference for managers, which form a mandatory framework for financial administration in New Forest District Council.

### **Summary of Amendments**

4. The key changes proposed are to amend the current threshold limits found at Appendix 1 for transfers, virements and supplementary budgets as revised and detailed in Appendix 2.
5. Additionally, the Authorisation Level Required table now clearly defines those who must be consulted and those who are the ultimate decision maker, as well as those making the initial request.
6. The proposed Financial Regulations can be found in Appendix 3. Some minor and grammatical updates have been made including alterations to values, job roles and specific procedural policy updates.
7. Furthermore, the thresholds for certifying payments have consequently been adjusted to align with the new management structure and can be found in paragraph 11.1.1 in appendix 3.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

8. The Financial Regulations provide the governance and framework for the council's financial activity. In turn they provide controlled flexibility to budget holders, enabling decisions to be made that support all council priorities, whilst continuing to be financially responsible.

### **Options appraisal**

9. The Council could choose not to agree to the proposed revisions and maintain the existing authorisation levels which would not result in empowering managers to take on greater responsibility for their budget and could potentially create undesired delays to budgetary decisions.

## **Consultation undertaken**

10. Internal consultation between the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate, NFDC statutory officers and finance officers, have determined the recommendation presented in the report.
11. The Audit Committee considered the proposed financial regulations at its meeting 21 March 2025 and supported recommendation 1 set out in the report. Recommendation 2 was not presented to the Committee but is consequential to the approval of the updated financial regulations.

## **Financial and resource implications**

12. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. The revisions do however empower managers across the Council to make financial decisions in their service areas. As a matter of course, managers will be expected to consult and brief their respective Portfolio Holders on the matters affecting their budgets, on a regular basis.

## **Legal implications**

11. There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.
12. Consequential amendments to the Constitution arising from the changes to thresholds, including implications for the Key Decision threshold will be made following the decision.

## **Risk assessment**

13. The level and breadth of consultation supporting the decision maker is considered appropriate to any increased potential financial risk.

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

14. There are no direct environmental, climate or nature implications as a result of this report.

## **Equalities implications**

15. There are no direct equalities implications as a result of this report.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

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

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

17. There are no direct data protection or information governance implications as a result of this report. Financial systems, where necessary, shall need to be updated with the relevant thresholds applicable to officers.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – NFDC Financial Regulations Summary – Authorisation Level Required (Current)

Appendix 2 – NFDC Financial Regulations Summary – Authorisation Level Required (Proposed)

Appendix 3 – Financial Regulations (Proposed)

Appendix 4 – Annex B of Contract Standing Orders (Proposed)

### **Background Papers:**

Council 8 April 2024:

[Agenda Item 5 Financial Regulations Review](#)

Audit Committee 22 March 2024:

[Agenda Item 10 Review of Financial Regulations](#)

## NFDC FINANCIAL REGULATIONS SUMMARY - AUTHORISATION LEVELS REQUIRED (CURRENT)

Table 1: Authorisations Required for Budget Transfers, Virements & Supplementary Budgets								
Value	S151 Officer	Senior/ Service Manager (Band 10-11)	Assistant Director	Strategic Director	Portfolio Holder	Finance Portfolio Holder	Cabinet	Council
Transfers: Any Value	Y	Y						
Virements:								
<= £25,000	Y	Y						
£25,001 - £50,000	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
£50,001 - £240,000 revenue	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	
£50,001 - £240,000 capital	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
> £240,000	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y
Supplementary Budgets:								
<= £10,000	Y	Y						
£10,001 - £50,000	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
£50,001 - £120,000 revenue	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	
£50,001 - £120,000 capital	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
> £120,000	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y

# NFDC FINANCIAL REGULATIONS SUMMARY - AUTHORISATION LEVELS REQUIRED (PROPOSED)

Table 1: Authorisations Required for Budget Transfers, Virements & Supplementary Budgets								
Value	S151 Officer	Senior/ Service Manager (Band 10-11)	Assistant Director*	Strategic Director	Portfolio Holder	Finance Portfolio Holder	Cabinet	Council
Transfers: Any Value	C	D						
Virements:								
<= £50,000	C	D	C*					
£50,001 - £150,000	C	R	R	D	C			
£150,001 - £450,000 revenue	C	R	R	R			D	
£150,001 - £450,000 capital	C	R	R	D	C	C		
> £450,000	C	R	R	R			C	D
Supplementary Budgets:								
<= £25,000	C	D	C*					
£25,001 - £150,000	C	R	R	D	C	C		
£150,001 - £450,000 revenue	C	R	R	R			D	
£150,001 - £450,000 capital	C	R	R	D	C	C		
> £450,000	C	R	R	R			C	D

R = Requester

D = Decision maker

C = Consultee

\*Note: should your organisational structure not include an Assistant Director then you must consult your Strategic Director



## FINANCIAL REGULATIONS



1. GENERAL MATTERS OF FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION	<b>3</b>
2. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER	<b>4</b>
3. AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS AND FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS	<b>6</b>
4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL	<b>7</b>
5. INCOME	<b>20</b>
6. INSURANCE	<b>22</b>
7. INVENTORIES, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL OF ASSETS	<b>23</b>
8. STOCKS AND STORES	<b>25</b>
9. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS TREASURY MANAGEMENT, INVESTMENTS AND TRUST FUNDS	<b>26</b>
10. ORDERS FOR GOODS AND SERVICES	<b>28</b>
11. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS	<b>29</b>
12. PETTY CASH IMPRESTS AND CHANGE FLOATS	<b>31</b>
13. SALARIES	<b>32</b>
SCHEDULE 1 – SUMMARY OF REQUIRED APPROVALS FOR BUDGET TRANSFERS, VIREMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGETS	<b>33</b>



## 1. GENERAL MATTERS OF FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

- 1.1 The Council shall approve the overall financial strategy. The Cabinet, Portfolio Holders, Committees and Scrutiny Panels may act within the powers delegated to them by the Council and within these Regulations.
- 1.2 These regulations apply to the Council, its members, and officers in all its functions. This includes functions carried out under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance act 1988, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 1.3 The Section 151 Officer may set aside these regulations if they consider it necessary. Any decision to suspend Financial Regulations will be reported to the Council. In the event of a civil emergency the deputy Section 151 Officer may set aside these regulations if they consider it necessary.
- 1.4 Where the Council performs works under an agency agreement with another authority or body, the financial regulations of the principal authority shall take precedence over these regulations, unless otherwise agreed.
- 1.5 These regulations shall be read in conjunction with Standing Orders as to Contracts.
- 1.6 Except for regulations 2.1, 2.1.1 and 3.1, the Section 151 Officer may nominate an officer to exercise any power or duty these regulations confer on them. In addition to the statutory Register of Delegations maintained by the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer shall maintain a register of the powers and duties they confer, and the job titles of the officers on whom they have conferred each power or duty.
- 1.7 Where these regulations give a Strategic Director, Assistant Director, or Senior/Service Manager power to authorise an officer to exercise a power or duty, the Strategic Director, Assistant Director, or Senior/Service Manager shall maintain a register of all authorisations and the job titles of the officers who are authorised.
- 1.8 Reports under these regulations shall, where practical, be in writing. In writing includes email communication but formal budget authorisation may only be achieved by completing fully the proper control document or through the formal Cabinet/Council process.
- 1.9 The Section 151 Officer will issue supporting financial practice notes from time to time. These should be read in conjunction with these regulations.

## 2. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The Section 151 Officer is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs for the purposes of section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

They are directed by the Council.

They are authorised to determine the financial practices, procedures and systems required.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 2.1.1 The Section 151 Officer will report to each Member of the Council and to the Council's external auditors if the Council, the Cabinet, Portfolio Holder, Committee, or an Officer:
- (a) has made, or is about to make, a decision which involves or would involve the Council incurring unlawful expenditure; or
  - (b) has taken, or is about to take, a course of action which if pursued to its conclusion would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss to the Council; or
  - (c) is about to enter an item of account unlawfully.

This is required by section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988.

- 2.2 Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors and Senior/Service Managers shall ensure proper financial control of the parts of the budget for which they are responsible. They are authorised to commit revenue or capital expenditure:

- (a) which is authorised through the Council's approved revenue and capital budgets; or
- (b) by virement or tolerances permitted by section 4 of these Regulations.

- 2.2.1 Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors and Senior/Service Managers may authorise **other** officers to exercise financial authority. Such authorisation does not reduce the overall responsibility of Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors, and Senior/Service Managers.

- 2.2.2 Details of such delegations shall be sent to the Chief Executive, who shall include the delegations in the Register of Delegations.

- 2.3 The Cabinet, Portfolio Holder, Committee, Panel or Council must consider a report which clearly identifies the costs and benefits before it takes a decision on any new proposals which include any material financial implications.

- 2.3.1 Any financial proposals must:
- (a) be approved by the Section 151 Officer and,
  - (b) comply with these regulations.

2. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<p>2.4 Where expenditure is urgently required outside the regulations set out in Section 4, the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Finance and the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for the relevant service area, may authorise approval.</p>	<p>2.4.1 The action taken must be reported to the next meeting of the Council.</p>

3. AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS AND FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

REGULATIONS 3.1 AND 3.1.1 TO 3.1.2 COMPLEMENT THE ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT REGULATIONS 2015

GENERAL PRINCIPLES		PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS	
3.1	The Section 151 Officer is the Responsible Financial Officer. They shall maintain an adequate and effective internal audit of the Council in accordance with relevant legislation.	3.1.1	<p>In carrying out their duties under 3.1, the Section 151 Officer, or their authorised representative, may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) enter any Council premises or land at any reasonable time, subject to any statutory requirements;</li><li>(b) have access to all records and documents concerning any past or prospective financial transactions of the Council;</li><li>(c) require, and receive, any necessary explanations concerning any matter under examination;</li><li>(d) require any employee of the Council to produce any Council property under their control.</li></ul>
		3.1.2	All employees have a duty to report suspected fraud or irregularities immediately to the Section 151 Officer. They shall take the steps they consider necessary under the Council’s Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, and Anti-Money Laundering Policy.
		3.1.3	Any suspected fraud or irregularity concerning the Section 151 Officer must be reported to the designated deputy Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<b>Revenue Budget Preparation</b>	<b>Revenue Budget Preparation</b>
<p>4.1 The Leader of the Council shall ensure preparation of detailed budgets of both income and expenditure for all services, for approval by the Cabinet and the Council.</p>	<p>4.1.1 In preparing detailed budgets for expenditure and income, the overall financial strategy and spending priorities approved by the Council must be adopted.</p> <p>4.1.2 The Section 151 Officer shall determine the timetable and procedures for budget preparation.</p> <p>4.1.3 No budgets shall be created without the consent of the Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>4.1.4 Budgets may not include contingency sums for unplanned expenditure. These regulations contain enough flexibility to meet unplanned expenditure.</p> <p>4.1.5 Business Units should aim to recover all their costs in accordance with guidelines issued by the Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>4.1.6 Budgets must identify the gross sums for each item of income and expenditure.</p>
<p>4.2 The Section 151 Officer shall determine financing arrangements for all approved expenditure.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Expenditure which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) involves any leasing, hire purchase, or rental agreements, and</li> <li>(b) may have implications for the Council under the Government's capital expenditure controls,</li> </ul> <p>may not be incurred without the Section 151 Officer's approval.</p>

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Revenue Expenditure – Budget Movements

- 4.3 Budget provision may be moved from one budget heading to another by Senior/Service Managers.

The Section 151 Officer will determine whether a budget movement (where there is no increase in overall budget) can take place either as a transfer as a virement.

Budget Transfers are movements between similar budget priorities and will require adherence to 4.3.1 – 4.3.4.

Budget Virements are movements between different budget priorities and will require adherence to 4.3.1 – 4.4.5.

The relevant Service Accountant must be informed of all budget movements to ensure that the Financial Information System budget position is accurate, to assist budgetary control.

**The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all transfer proposals before expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed budget movements.**

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Revenue Expenditure – Budget Movements

- 4.3.1 Virements or budget transfers may not be made from headings for Support Services or Capital Financing. Virement from Capital Charges may only be undertaken with the prior approval of the Section 151 Officer, irrespective of the value.
- 4.3.2 Virement or budget transfers from Employee allocations may only be undertaken with the agreement of the source Service Manager, irrespective of the value.
- 4.3.3 Virement or budget transfers from income will generally constitute a Supplementary Budget request.
- 4.3.4 All requests for virements or budget transfers must be made using the proper control document.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<b>Revenue Expenditures - Budget Movements (Cont.)</b>	<b>Revenue Expenditures - Budget Movements (Cont.)</b>
4.4 All proposals for virement shall be approved in line with the requirements outlined in 4.4.1 – 4.4.5.	4.4.1 <b>Sums up to £50,000 vired between individual service cost centres:</b> requires the approval(s) of the Senior/Service Manager(s) in consultation with their Assistant Director(s) (or Strategic Director(s)).
<b>The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all virement proposals <u>before</u> expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed budget movements.</b>	4.4.2 <b>Sums between £50,000 and £150,000:</b> require the approval(s) of the relevant Strategic Director(s) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder(s) with responsibility for the Service(s) to/from which the virement is made.
	4.4.3 <b>Sums between £150,000 and £450,000:</b> require approval of the Cabinet.
	4.4.4 <b>Sums over £450,000:</b> require approval of the Council.
	4.4.5 <b>More than one request for virement to or from the same budget in the same financial year:</b> sums must be aggregated to decide which of regulations 4.4.1 to 4.4.4 applies.
4.5 Virement must not commit the Council to increased net expenditure in future years. Particular care is required if the virement is to an employee budget.	4.5.1 Virement authorisation must identify whether the virement is for one year only or is ongoing. Ongoing requests that will lead to increasing expenditure in future years on a particular budget heading must identify the budget(s) for matching reductions for future years. Otherwise, the request must be considered as a supplementary budget rather than a virement.

## BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
--------------------	-----------------------------------

---

**Revenue Expenditures - Budget Movements (Cont.)**

---

**Revenue Expenditures - Budget Movements (Cont.)**

- 4.6 Virement between revenue and capital budgets is not generally permitted. Any exceptional proposals require the prior approval of the Section 151 Officer.
-



## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Revenue Expenditure – Supplementary Budgets

- 4.7 There is no authority to spend in excess of an approved budget. If this becomes necessary **and a budget movement is not possible** then a supplementary budget must be obtained.

The base for supplementary budgets is the lowest service cost centre level identified in the approved Policy budget.

For example: -

- Cemeteries
- Applemore Health and Leisure Centre
- Public Conveniences
- HRA Reactive Maintenance

Any proposal for a supplementary budget must be approved in line with the requirements outlined in 4.7.2 – 4.7.6 **before** expenditure is committed.

**The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all supplementary budget proposals before expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed supplementary budgets.**

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Revenue Expenditure – Supplementary Budgets

- 4.7.1 All requests for supplementary budgets must be made using the proper control document and must follow the procedures below.
- 4.7.2 **Sums up to £25,000:** require the approval(s) of the Senior/Service Manager(s) in consultation with their Assistant Director (or Strategic Director).
- 4.7.3 **Sums between £25,001 and £150,000:** require the approval(s) of the Strategic Director(s) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder(s) with responsibility for the Service(s).
- 4.7.4 **Sums between £150,001 and £450,000:** require approval of the Cabinet.
- 4.7.5 **Sums over £450,000:** require approval of the Council.
- 4.7.6 **More than one request for supplementary budget for the same budget in the same financial year:** sums must be aggregated to decide which of regulations 4.7.2 to 4.7.5 applies.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<b>Capital Budget Preparation</b>	<b>Capital Budget Preparation</b>
4.8 The Leader of the Council shall ensure preparation of detailed budgets of both income and expenditure for all services, for approval by the Cabinet and the Council.	4.8.1 In preparing detailed proposals for capital schemes, the overall strategy and spending priorities approved by the Council must be adopted.
4.9 The strategic objectives and priorities for capital expenditure and asset utilisation will be identified annually in the Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management and Replacement Plans.	4.9.1 The Section 151 Officer will determine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the definition of capital and revenue expenditure; and capital memorandum items, i.e. assets to be acquired under lease arrangements.</li> <li>(b) the timetable and procedures for capital budget preparation, and</li> <li>(c) de-minimis levels for capital expenditure.</li> </ul> 4.9.2 Each scheme bid must be supported by a business case. This must include a proper project appraisal, all options considered, forecast of revenue implications for each year during implementation, and for future years and, where appropriate, the incidence of expenditure.           4.9.3 Each scheme must clearly identify proposed expenditure on each significant element of the project.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Capital Budget Preparation (cont.)

- 4.10 The Section 151 Officer will determine the financial arrangements for all approved expenditure.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Capital Budget Preparation (cont.)

- 4.10.1 Expenditure which:
- (a) involves any leasing, hire purchase or rental agreements, and
  - (b) may have implications for the Council under the Government's capital expenditure controls,
- may not be incurred without the approval of the Section 151 Officer.
- 4.10.2 The availability of sources of external funding should be identified at the time the capital expenditure is proposed, together with any future financial implications for this Council.
- 4.11.1 If new or increased grant or contributions are received towards specific schemes, the Capital expenditure budget will be grossed up accordingly and retrospectively reported for information as appropriate via Financial Monitoring. If increased NFDC resources are required, Virement and Supplementary Budget rules will apply as usual.

- 4.11 Supplementary Budget rules do not apply in instances where external funding received allows an increase in, or new scheme specific expenditure.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Capital Expenditure – Budget Movements

#### Capital Expenditure – Budget Movements

- 4.12 Budgetary provision may be moved from one capital scheme to another providing the proposals achieve the Council's strategic objectives outlined in the Capital Strategy.

- 4.13 The Section 151 Officer will determine whether a budget movement (where there is no increase in overall budget) can take place either as a transfer as a virement.

Budget Transfers are movements between similar budget priorities and will require adherence to 4.13.1 – 4.13.2.

Budget Virements are movements between different budget priorities and will require adherence to 4.13.1 – 4.14.5.

The relevant Service Accountant must be informed of all budget movements to ensure that the Financial Information System budget position is accurate, to assist budgetary control.

**The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all transfer proposals before expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed budget movements.**

- 4.13.1 External funding and approvals which are scheme specific are not available for virements unless prior approval has been obtained from the external funder/approver.

- 4.13.2 All requests for virement must be made using the proper control document.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

##### Capital Expenditure –Budget Movements (Cont.)

- 4.14 All proposals for virement shall be approved in line with the requirements outlined in 4.14.1 – 4.14.5.

**The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all virement proposals before expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed budget movements.**

##### Capital Expenditure –Budget Movements (Cont.)

- 4.14.1 **Sums up to £50,000:** require the approval(s) of the Senior/Service Manager(s) in consultation with their Assistant Director (or Strategic Director).
- 4.14.2 **Sums between £50,001 and £150,000:** require the approval(s) of the relevant Strategic Director(s) in consultations with the Portfolio Holder(s) with responsibility for the Service(s).
- 4.14.3 **Sums between £150,001 and £450,000:** require the approval(s) of the relevant Strategic Director(s), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for the Service(s).
- 4.14.4 **Sums over £450,000:** require approval by the Council.
- 4.14.5 **More than one request for virement to or from the same scheme in the same financial year: sums must be aggregated to decide which of regulations 4.14.1 to 4.14.4 applies.**

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Capital Expenditure – Supplementary Budgets

- 4.15 There is no authority to spend in excess of an approved budget. If this becomes necessary **and a budget movement is not possible** then a supplementary budget must be obtained.

Any proposal for a supplementary budget must be approved in line with the requirements outlined in 4.15.2 – 4.15.5 **before** expenditure is committed.

**The Section 151 Officer must be consulted on all supplementary budget proposals before expenditure is committed and can veto any proposed supplementary budgets.**

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Capital Expenditure – Supplementary Budgets

- 4.15.1 All requests for supplementary budgets must be made using the proper control document and must follow the procedures below.
- 4.15.2 **Sums up to £25,000:** require the approval(s) of the Senior/Service Manager(s) in consultation with their relevant Assistant Director(s) (or Strategic Director(s)).
- 4.15.3 **Sums between £25,001 and £450,000:** require the approval(s) of the relevant Strategic Director(s), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder(s) with responsibility for the Service(s).
- 4.15.4 **Sums over £450,000:** require approval of the Council.
- 4.15.5 **More than one request for supplementary budget for the same budget in the same financial year:** sums must be aggregated to decide which of regulations 4.15.2 to 4.15.4 applies.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting

- 4.16 Expenditure may only be committed from a budget for the purpose for which it was approved.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting

- 4.16.1 Budget Responsible Officers and Senior/Service Managers will:
- (a) monitor actual performance on each budget regularly; and
  - (b) take appropriate steps to ensure budgets are not overspent.
- 4.17.1 Senior/Service Managers will provide data or supporting information for all budgetary control reports.
- 4.17.2 Senior/Service Managers will identify opportunities for savings and additional income and shall ensure these are included promptly in the appropriate monitoring reports and budget plans.
- 4.17.3 Senior/Service Managers will identify, at the earliest opportunity, potential expenditure for which there is no budget provision. They shall also identify proposed sources of finance for meeting additional expenditure, either by movements or supplementary budget (regulations 4.3 to 4.15).
- 4.17.4 Budget Responsible Officers are responsible for carrying out budgetary control and for informing Senior/Service Managers of any potential budget variations at the earliest opportunity, in order to allow Senior/Service Managers to fulfil their obligations.

- 4.17 The Section 151 Officer will report regularly to the Executive Management Team, Portfolio Holders, Scrutiny Panels, and the Cabinet, on overall financial performance, predicted gross capital expenditure and net revenue expenditure for the current financial year.

## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting (cont.)

- 4.18 Unspent revenue budgetary provision may not be carried forward between financial years, unless regulation 4.18.1 has been applied.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting (cont.)

- 4.17.5 The Section 151 Officer's financial monitoring report will identify material budget movements and supplementary budgets.
- 4.17.6 Any budget changes which impact on the employee establishment must also be notified by the Budget Responsible Officer to the Human Resources Section to ensure that the HR system is updated.
- 4.17.7 In circumstances where the regulations in section 4 cannot be complied with, for instance where expenditure needs to be incurred before Cabinet or Council approval is obtained, regulation 2.4 should be applied.
- 4.18.1 The Section 151 Officer may approve earmarking of funds to meet approved expenditure in the following financial year, subject to a written request by a Strategic Director, Assistant Director, or Senior/Service Manager.



## 4. BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting (cont.)

- 4.19 Exceptionally, schemes may be moved between financial years. This is termed “rephasing” and is subject to the approval of the Section 151 Officer.
- The inclusion of items in the expenditure plans outside of the current financial year is an intention to spend only. Budget provision does not exist for those items, other than when it relates to a scheme already committed to in the current year’s budget, or when the annual budget identified is part of a medium term strategy and so is indicative for the current fiscal year and not fixed.

#### Use of Provisions and Reserves

- 4.20 Provisions and earmarked reserves may only be used for the purpose for which they were originally approved.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

#### Budgetary Control/Reporting (cont.)

- 4.19.1 Any proposals to rephase a capital scheme or part of a capital scheme from the current financial year to a future financial year must be included in the regular financial monitoring reports presented to Cabinet. If there are any adverse financial consequences of such proposals a separate report detailing reasons for the rephasing, and the consequences must also be presented. The Section 151 Officer will consider the financial position of the relevant budget and strategic targets for the financial year before deciding whether to support the recommendation.
- 4.19.2 For spend in line with the fulfilment of an adopted medium term strategy, the Section 151 officer may approve additional spend in any one given year above the identified indicative annual budget.
- 4.19.3 Any proposal to bring forward new scheme expenditure from future years to the current financial year should be considered as a supplementary budget and follow the regulations set out in section 4.7 and 4.15.

#### Use of Provisions and Reserves

- 4.20.1 The Section 151 Officer must approve all proposals before expenditure is incurred.

## 5. INCOME

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 The Section 151 Officer shall approve arrangements for collecting income due to the Council.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 5.1.1 The Section 151 Officer must be notified promptly of:
- (a) all money due to the Council outside of the course of ordinary business;
  - (b) contracts, leases, and other agreements entered into which involve the Council receiving money.
- 5.1.2 The Section 151 Officer will have the right to inspect any documents or other evidence.
- 5.1.3 Any agreement which allows the extension of credit payment facilities must be agreed in advance by the Section 151 Officer.
- 5.1.4 The Section 151 Officer will be responsible for ordering, issuing, and controlling all receipt forms.
- 5.1.5 An official receipt must be made available for all cash received on the Council's behalf. An accounting record in a form acceptable to the Section 151 Officer shall be made for any other remittance received.
- 5.1.6 All money received must be banked intact at frequent, regular intervals. The procedures issued by the Section 151 Officer must be followed.
- 5.1.7 Personal cheques must not be cashed out of money held on the Council's behalf.

## 5. INCOME

GENERAL PRINCIPLES		PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS	
5.2	At least once a year each Senior/Service Manager will review all fees and charges for services they are responsible for.	5.2.1	The review will be undertaken in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder and changes approved in accordance with the prevailing policy.
5.3	The Section 151 Officer shall be authorised to write off uncollectable or cancelled debt and will delegate approval for write-offs up to a certain level to authorised Senior/Service Managers.	5.3.1	The Section 151 Officer will review and write-off debts above the levels delegated to Senior/Service Managers.
		5.3.2	The Section 151 Officer shall report written off debt to Audit Committee annually.

## 6. INSURANCE

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 The Deputy Section 151 Officer and Customer Services shall arrange insurance cover to meet the Council's requirements. They shall be responsible for registering any claims.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 6.1.1 Senior/Service Managers shall consult with, and inform, the Deputy Section 151 Officer immediately of: -
- (a) all new risks and liabilities which may need to be insured;
  - (b) any changes which may affect existing insurances;
  - (c) anything which may lead to a claim by or against the Council;
  - (d) any interest in property granted by or to the Council which may involve a transfer of insurance cover; or
  - (e) the terms of any indemnity the Council is requested to give.
- 6.1.2 Contractors or agents acting for the Council must have insurance arrangements which adequately indemnify the Council against any third-party claim. Senior/Service Managers shall consult with the Deputy Section 151 Officer to ensure this.

7. INVENTORIES, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES		PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS	
7.1	The Senior/Service Manager responsible for Estates will ensure a register of land and buildings owned by, or leased to, the Council is maintained.	7.1.1	The register of land and buildings will record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) the purpose for which the land and buildings are held;</li><li>(b) the location;</li><li>(c) the extent;</li><li>(d) the plan reference;</li><li>(e) the purchase details;</li><li>(f) the particulars and nature of the interest;</li><li>(g) rents payable, and</li><li>(h) tenancies granted.</li></ul>
		7.1.3	Senior/Service Managers shall supply the Section 151 Officer with the information necessary to maintain the Council's asset register of other assets (for example Vehicles & Plant).
7.2	The Section 151 Officer will ensure safe custody of the title deeds of property owned by, or mortgaged to, the Council.	7.2.1	The Senior/Service Manager responsible for Legal Services acts on behalf of the Section 151 Officer for this purpose.

7. INVENTORIES, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES		PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS	
7.3	Senior/Service Managers will keep inventories of all items of moveable furniture, equipment, minor Vehicles & Plant, where the individual item value is greater than £500 but less than the capital de-minimus level.	7.3.1	Senior/Service Managers will arrange an annual check of inventories.
		7.3.2	The Senior/Service Manager responsible for ICT Operations will be responsible for maintaining an inventory of the ICT equipment.
7.4	Senior/Service Managers will ensure that proper security is always maintained for all assets under their control, both leased and purchased.		
7.5	Senior/Service Managers will aim for maximum utilisation of assets.		
7.6	The Section 151 Officer will determine procedures for disposing of assets, both leased and purchased.		

## 8. STOCKS AND STORES

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<p>8.1 Senior/Service Managers are responsible for the receipt, safe custody, proper security, and issue, of stocks and stores within their service areas.</p>	<p>8.1.1 Stocks and stores records must be maintained in a form agreed with the Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>8.1.2 Senior/Service Managers shall supply the Section 151 Officer with the information they require for the Council's financial records.</p> <p>8.1.3 Senior/Service Managers shall arrange for 'independent' physical counts of stocks at least once a year.</p>
<p>8.2 Stocks must be maintained at the lowest level which meets operational requirements.</p>	
<p>8.3 Senior/Service Managers shall notify the Section 151 Officer immediately if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) a deficiency of stocks and stores occurs; or</li> <li>(b) obsolete items are identified.</li> </ul> <p>...if above the delegated levels as documented in the Council's write-off policy.</p>	<p>8.3.1 The Section 151 Officer shall decide on the course of action where a deficiency, or obsolete items, are identified. They may authorise any value of write-off. Depending on the sums involved, they may report to the Cabinet or Council, as appropriate.</p> <p>8.3.2 Disposal of surplus or obsolete stocks and stores must comply with "Disposal of Surplus Items Procedures."</p>

## 9. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT, INVESTMENTS AND TRUST FUNDS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES	PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS
<p>9.1 The Section 151 Officer is authorised to make all arrangements for banking services, and to determine banking procedures.</p>	<p>9.1.1 All bank accounts shall be in the name of the Council, related parties, or wholly owned subsidiaries.</p> <p>9.1.2 The Section 151 Officer shall take measures to prevent misappropriation or misuse of Council funds.</p>
<p>9.2 The Section 151 Officer is authorised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) borrow and lend all monies; and</li> <li>(b) arrange for the investment of funds, either directly, or through a delegation to a third party</li> </ul>	<p>9.2.1 The Section 151 Officer is required to act in accordance with the adopted CIPFA Code for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.</p> <p>9.2.2 The Section 151 Officer shall report to the Audit Committee annually on how they have exercised his delegated Treasury Management powers.</p> <p>9.2.3 All investments shall be made in the name of the Council, except bearer securities and trust funds.</p> <p>9.2.4 All officers who act as trustees of trust funds because of their official position must give the Section 151 Officer all title documents concerning the trust.</p>



## 9. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT, INVESTMENTS AND TRUST FUNDS

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

9.3 The Council will agree the Treasury Management Strategy annually.

9.3.1 The Section 151 Officer will:

- (a) recommend the Strategy to the Council after approval of the Audit Committee, and,
- (b) implement the Strategy.

9.4 The Council will set the following borrowing limits before the start of the financial year:

- (a) an amount of money (the 'authorised limit') which is the maximum amount the Council may have outstanding as borrowing;
- (b) an amount which is a part of the authorised limit (the 'operational limit'), which is the average amount the Council may have outstanding as borrowing; and
- (c) a limit on the proportion of the total amount of interest payable by the Council which:
  - i. is at a rate or rates which can be varied by the person to whom it is payable, or
  - ii. can vary by reference to external factors.

The Council may vary these limits at any time.

9.4.1 The Section 151 Officer will report to the Council if borrowing reaches a level which may result in the limits being breached.

9.4.2 The Section 151 Officer will be authorised to exercise the Council's statutory borrowing powers, and act as the registrar of loan instruments.

9.4.3 They may borrow amounts which can be contained within the limits of the Council's capital financing requirement.

9.4.4 They will maintain records of all money the Council borrows. Any borrowing must be in an appropriate manner and on appropriate terms and conditions.

9.4.5 The borrowing limits must not exceed the maximum prescribed.

## 10. ORDERS FOR GOODS AND SERVICES

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 10.1 Official orders must be issued for all goods and services required by the Council, except for:
- (a) public utilities;
  - (b) purchases from imprest accounts or petty cash;
  - (c) works or services provided under a contract, where Standing Orders as to Contracts apply;
  - (d) purchases made through corporate credit cards, gateway procurement cards or through the Internet

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 10.1.1 The Section 151 Officer shall approve the form of official orders.  
A separate Code of Practice will be issued by the Section 151 Officer for the use of corporate credit cards, gateway procurement cards and the Internet, for purchases of goods and services. All purchases must be in accordance with this Code.
- 10.1.2

## 11. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 11.1 Senior/Service Managers, or their authorised officers, will certify all payments for goods, supplies, or services.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 11.1.1 The Section 151 Officer will approve manual and electronic procedures for certifying payments. The current thresholds are as follows:

Budget Administration Officer	up to £10,000
Budget Responsible Officer	£10,000-£50,000
Senior/Service Manager	£50,000-£450,000
Assistant Director	£450,000-£2m
Strategic Director	£2m - £5m
Chief Executive and S151 Officer	over £5m

- 11.1.2 A Senior/Service Manager may authorise an officer in their department to certify official orders, accounts for payment and salary and wages records.
- 11.1.3 Senior/Service Managers shall keep a record of the specimen signatures or passwords of officers who are authorised to certify accounts for payment. The record must be in a form acceptable to the Section 151 Officer. Senior/Service Managers must send copies of specimen signatures or passwords to the Section 151 Officer.
- 11.1.4 Senior/Service Managers shall immediately notify the Section 151 Officer when an authorised officer leaves the employment of the Council.
- 11.1.5 All payments for goods, supplies or services must be invoiced.

## 11. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 11.1.6 Certification by an authorised officer means that:
- (a) the expenditure has been properly incurred, and there is budget provision or authority to spend; and
  - (b) the goods, supplies or services have been received or carried out, checked for quantity and quality, and approved; and
  - (c) appropriate entries have been made in inventories or stores records; and,
  - (d) the prices, discounts and other allowances are correct, and extensions and calculations accord with the Section 151 Officers' Invoice Certification guidance notes; and
  - (e) the invoice is an original (not a copy or duplicate) and, where appropriate, is a proper VAT (not a proforma) invoice; and,
  - (f) in the case of public utility charges, standing charges are correct and the consumption recorded is reasonable.
- 11.1.7 To maintain internal control:
- (a) the authorising officer must not normally be the person who ordered or received the goods; and
  - (b) another authorised officer must certify any reimbursement of personal expenditure.

## 12. PETTY CASH IMPRESTS AND CHANGE FLOATS

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 12.1 The Section 151 Officer will authorise change floats and imprest accounts for defraying minor expenditure.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 12.1.1 Petty cash payments will be limited to:
- (a) the maximum approved limit, and
  - (b) minor items of expenditure.
- They must be supported by receipts, including proper VAT receipts where appropriate.
- 12.1.2 All income received on the Council's behalf must be banked or paid as provided in regulation 5.1. It may not be paid into an imprest account.
- 12.1.3 Reimbursements to imprest accounts must be made at least monthly.
- 12.1.4 Imprest holders are personally responsible for the custody of petty cash and shall ensure its safekeeping. On request they shall give the Section 151 Officer evidence of the state of the account.

## 13. SALARIES

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 13.1 The Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources will pay all salaries and other emoluments to all current and former Council employees.

- 13.2 Senior/Service Managers, or their authorised officers, will ensure that all employee appointments accord with Council policy and the approved budget, grades, and rates of pay.

### PRACTICES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

- 13.1.1 Senior/Service Managers, or their authorised officers, will notify the Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources as soon as possible of all matters affecting such payments. The Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources may specify the form of the notification.

- 13.2.1 Senior/Service Managers will maintain a record of the specimen signatures of officers currently authorised on their behalf to certify relevant pay documents and time sheets. The record shall be in a form acceptable to the Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources. Copies of specimen signatures shall be sent to the Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources.

- 13.2.2 All time sheets or other pay documents must be:
- (a) certified by or on behalf of the Senior/Service Manager; and
  - (b) in a form approved by the Senior/Service Manager responsible for Human Resources.

## SCHEDULE 1 – SUMMARY OF REQUIRED APPROVALS FOR BUDGET TRANSFERS, VIREMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGETS

Value	S151 Officer	Senior/ Service Manager (Band 10-11)	Assistant* Director	Strategic Director	Portfolio Holder	Finance Portfolio Holder	Cabinet	Council
Transfers: Any Value	C	D						
Virements:								
<= £50,000	C	D	C*					
£50,001 - £150,000	C	R	R	D	C			
£150,001 - £450,000 revenue	C	R	R	R			D	
£150,001 - £450,000 capital	C	R	R	D	C	C		
> £450,000	C	R	R	R			C	D
Supplementary Budgets:								
<= £25,000	C	D	C*					
£25,001 - £150,000	C	R	R	D	C	C		
£150,001 - £450,000 revenue	C	R	R	R			D	
£150,001 - £450,000 capital	C	R	R	D	C	C		
> £450,000	C	R	R	R			C	D
R = Requester								
D = Decision maker								
C = Consultee								
*Note: should your organisational structure not include an Assistant Director then you must consult your Strategic Director								

This page is intentionally left blank



## Appendix 4

### (Annex B of Contract Standing Orders) - NFDC Scheme of Delegations Vs. Procurement Contracts

Process	Covers	Strategic Procurement Manager	Budget Responsible Officer (BRO)	Senior/Service Manager	Assistant Director (AD)	Chief Exec & Strategic Directors (& Statutory Officers)*
<b>Awarding a Contract</b>	Award a contract following a quotation or tender exercise to a supplier with whom orders can be placed (in accordance with procurement rules).  Select the winning tender from a procurement exercise.	Up to £50k	Up to £50k	Up to £1M	Up to £3M	Unlimited
<b>Signing a Contract</b>	Sign under hand a contract awarded under a request for quotation or tender process.  Sign up to an agreement which ties the council into expenditure (e.g. maintenance agreement).  Sign up to an agreement which ties the council into a set of terms and conditions (e.g. grant agreement, IT facility agreement).	Up to £50k	Up to £50k	Up to £1M	Up to £3M	Unlimited
<b>Sealing a Deed</b>	All contracts estimated over the value of £213,477 (the UK Threshold effective from 01 Jan 2022 for Goods/Services) must be referred to Legal Services to confirm whether they require sealing.	N/A	N/A	Up to £1M (Legal Services)	Up to £3M (Legal Services)	Unlimited
<b>Purchase Order Approval</b>	Purchases Orders (PO) are mandatory for the supply of works, goods or services. Use Finance Mgt System to create PO once contract is signed / sealed.	N/A	BROfficer = Up to £50k BRAdmin = Up to £10k	Up to £450,000	Up to £2M	<b>Strategic Directors</b> Up to £5m <b>Chief Exec &amp; S151</b> Unlimited
<b>Invoice payment</b>	All works, goods and services invoices must be checked and approved for payment (via GRN process) being processed for payment by Accounts Payable. Supplier Invoice must quote a valid NFDC PO number.	N/A	BROfficer = Up to £50k BRAdmin = Up to £10k	Up to £450,000	Up to £2M	<b>Strategic Directors</b> Up to £5m <b>Chief Exec &amp; S151</b> Unlimited

\*Statutory Officers are S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

\*\* Values are excluding VAT

This page is intentionally left blank

**Council – 14 April 2025**

**Report of Cabinet – [21 March 2025](#)**

## **Items resolved by Cabinet**

### **1. Devolution update and local government reorganisation interim plan**

**Portfolio** – Leader

#### **Cabinet resolution:**

That Cabinet:

- (a) Approved the joint submission to Government of the Interim Local Government Reorganisation Plan for Hampshire and the Solent, at Appendix 1;
- (b) Agreed to delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to approve the final interim submission on behalf of the Council, in the event that minor amendments are agreed by the 15 councils;
- (c) Considered the key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and communities of the New Forest;
- (d) Agreed to set in place a programme of engagement with town and parish councils to explore local service delivery and potential transfer of assets, and to bring back to Cabinet a policy for community asset transfer; and
- (e) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to access and spend funds from the Council's Devolution and LGR reserve.

#### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Leader explained that following the Special Council meeting on the 20 March 2025, it was the Council's view that recommendation 2c of the report should be amended as follows:

*"Cabinet considers key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and communities of the New Forest."*

The Leader introduced the Devolution Update and Local Government Reorganisation Interim Plan report.

The report outlined that the Council had been instructed by Government to work with other councils on devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Leader explained that this was not the Council's priority and that the Council did not consider LGR the right thing for the New Forest.

The Leader had been working as instructed with Leaders across the area and a draft of guiding principles had been submitted. It was confirmed that there was no consensus at this stage on options going forward and some councils were in favour of reorganisation for very large councils or for completely new makeups, which was not the view of NFDC.

Cabinet heard that it was the Council's belief that the best model of reorganisation for the New Forest was a rural-focused unitary authority, bringing together the New Forest area with Mid-Hampshire. This model of Council would be financially sustainable and would respect the heritage, support the economy and protect the unique environment of the New Forest.

The Leader stated that the debate heard at the Special Council meeting on 20 March 2025 was filled with heartfelt contributions and reiterated that NFDC would continue to prioritise the residents of the New Forest.

The Leader thanked all Councillors for their collective support to this stage.

The Chief Executive provided some further, technical information to the report. Cabinet was reminded of the contextual background of the LGR programme. It was explained that the Government required Hampshire councils' interim plan by 21 March 2025 which was featured as Appendix 1 to the report.

The interim plan was the result of discussions between leaders across Hampshire and the Solent and NFDC made strong representations during this process to ensure that key concerns were included. This submission was being considered by all councils across Hampshire and the Solent this week.

It was clarified that there was not a unified view across the fifteen councils and work would continue to develop one or more proposals before the final submission date of 26 September 2025. Cabinet heard that the proposed submission requests that the Government extend this timeline to November.

The Chief Executive explained that work on LGR was taking a significant amount of capacity from the Council's Senior Leadership Team and corporate services. It was expected, from experience, that the demand on capacity would grow and therefore Council had made the decision to allocate £150,000 budget to set up and resource their LGR Programme. It was explained that the report asked Cabinet to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to access and spend funds from the allocated reserve as necessary.

A key element of the programme would be the engagement of Town and Parish Councils to support them in exploring their role within Local Government going forward. Cabinet heard that NFDC were jointly holding an LGR event with the New Forest Association for Local Government for all of the District's Town and Parish Councils on 28 April 2025.

The Leader stated the published supplement to the report following the resolution passed by Council at their Special meeting on 20 March 2025. The resolution was to amend recommendation 2c within the report and included key points from the debate at the meeting. The new recommendation was as follows: *"Cabinet considers key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and communities of the New Forest."*

Members of the Cabinet were invited to make comments on the item. The main points were as follows:

- It was noted that debate at the Special Council meeting was thorough, and that consensus was evident that NFDC's view on LGR was in the right direction.
- Cabinet acknowledged that there was a frustration and resentment insofar as the decision for LGR not being one of their own makings. Despite this, Cabinet agreed that achieving the best outcome for the residents of the New Forest was the Council's priority.
- It was noted that NFDC had a strong evidence base, following the corporate peer challenge and residents survey, to demonstrate that the District would be an asset to any future authority it formed a part of.
- The District's economic and community strength as well as its unique natural offering made it an extremely desirable area for other authorities to reorganise with. The Waterside was acknowledged as a

particularly important element of the District and was referred to as the New Forest's engine room.

- There was a consensus in not wanting to be merged within a city, due to the differences between the New Forest and the highly urban areas of Hampshire.
- Cabinet acknowledged that NFDC was widely recognised as one of the best councils for delivering services and that the Council's vision going forward would prioritise the principles of financial value and sustainability.
- It was stated that larger councils would see a further removal of decision-making and services from the residents of the New Forest and that this would run contrary to the Council's principle of strengthening localism and bringing decision making closer to the people of the New Forest.
- Comments were made on contingency plans and how the Council would need to be pragmatic throughout the process. A Cabinet member was reassured in the initial stages of their submission that NFDC were prepared despite the process being outside of their control.
- It was recognised that the LGR process was still within its early stages and that there would be lots of work undertaken on building a case that supports NFDC's desired outcome. A Cabinet member remarked that there appeared to be a democratic deficit in the process to this stage as the consultation did not provide much opportunity for respondents to express disagreement with the policy of devolution. It was also acknowledged that no consultation with residents or employees within the District had taken place on reorganisation.
- A non-Executive member expressed that the biggest driver behind the Council's work on LGR must be to achieve the best result for residents. It was stated that there were some faults within the interim plan submission but that there were several benefits. Maximising the Council's strengths would be imperative throughout the process. It was stated that NFDC must promote their economic base in discussions and negotiations going forward so that the reorganisation to a rural, unitary authority could be achieved.
- The District's many communities were acknowledged as being a fundamental aspect of the New Forest. Strong and positive engagement would be essential and a continued constructive response to all engagement with NFDC communities should be the aim.

- A non-Executive member expressed great disappointment and despondency at the entire process, stating that there had been no democratic mandate for local government reorganisation.

This page is intentionally left blank



**Council – 14 April 2025**

## **Report of Cabinet – [2 April 2025](#)**

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

#### **1. Allocation of community infrastructure levy (CIL) to local infrastructure projects**

**Portfolio** – Planning and Economy

##### **Cabinet Resolution:**

1. That the list of 31 projects be approved for inclusion in the capital programme for 2025/26 with a total budget of £998,100.87;
2. That the opening of the local infrastructure bid windows be approved, for bids up to £100,000, for the 2026/27 financial year for two-months during Spring 2025;
3. That the opening of a two-month expression of interest window be approved to explore the potential for further local and strategic infrastructure projects within the district; and
4. That the Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, be authorised to make such amendments as they deem appropriate to the approved project lists within 10% of the total budget. Any such amendments will be in accordance with financial regulations and reported to Cabinet via the financial monitoring reports.

##### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy reported that he felt privileged to be able to recommend the approval of CIL funding to the projects in and around the District. The assessment process had been rigorous, with scrutiny by both officers and members, through a task and finish group. 79 bids, had been received totalling £2.8 million and 31 were recommended for approval, spending just under £1 million of CIL funding.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the range of projects would benefit the community through the award of this funding. Projects included improvements to playgrounds, sport facilities, village halls and footpaths / bridleways. Thanks was expressed to members of the Task

and Finish Group for their valuable work and to officers for overseeing the assessment process.

The Portfolio Holder also reported that Cabinet were asked to approve an opening window for local infrastructure bids up to £100,000 for expenditure in 2026/27 as well the opening of an expression of interest window to explore further local and strategic infrastructure projects. This was in addition to the five strategic projects currently approved in October 2024.

The Service Manager – Planning, Policy Infrastructure and Delivery highlighted that a collaborate approach had been taken with members when considering the bids and thanked members for their involvement. If the projects were approved, work would be carried out at pace to release the next tranche of funding to the CIL projects.

A non-Cabinet Member spoke in support of the recommendations contained in the report, recognising the importance of spending the CIL funding in the District, as well as the opening window for local and strategic infrastructure projects. The Hythe Ferry pontoon project was highlighted. It was hoped that if a bid was submitted which met the criteria, that it could be supported due to benefits it would bring, including taking congestion away from the A326 and improved tourism.

## **2. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 25/26 allocations**

**Portfolio:** Planning and Economy

### **Cabinet Resolution:**

1. That the continued purpose of the UK SPF be noted;
2. That the allocation of 25/26 UKSPF funding towards specific projects as set out in the report be supported; and
3. That delegated authority is given for future decision making associated with the finalisation of the project programme for 25/26 UKSPF spend to the Strategic Director for Place Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy presented the report, highlighting that it was an opportunity for the Council to support to the local economy. Funding was proposed to support projects for start up businesses, apprenticeships, digital skills, business growth and those not in education employment or training (NEET). In addition to this,

three capital projects were proposed. The total funding was for £313,000 towards the projects detailed in Table 1 of the report, as well as a small management fee. The full list of projects which had been considered was detailed in Appendix 1.

The Assistant Director for Place Development, expressed thanks to the member engagement which had taken place through the democratic process. The recommendations proposed, had been mindful that there was a predominant focus on revenue expenditure to support the development of skills and to support local businesses. Funding needed to be spent by 31 March 2026 and therefore it would be a challenge to ensure this work was completed.

A number of non-Cabinet members spoke in support of the recommendations within the report.

The issue of NEET and digital skills was raised by a non-Cabinet member recognising that might be based around the educational facilities and highlighted that the District had poor public transport links, which might be a barrier for some residents to access these courses. It was suggested that the provision of this could be delivered in the community which would be more accessible. The Assistant Director of Place Development acknowledged this as an issue and reported it would be considered when engaging with educational providers.

A number of non-Cabinet Members spoke about the reconnection of Calshot bus services, which had been identified as a potential project which had not been recommended to receive funding. The value of this project was recognised, and a non-Cabinet member highlighted that discussions were taking place regarding funding with for example, Hampshire County Council and Community First. Further detailed information was requested regarding the reasons behind why the project was not being supported at the current time and it was agreed this would be provided outside of the meeting, directly to the councillor.

### **3. Community Lottery Scheme**

**Portfolio:** Community, Safety and Wellbeing

**Cabinet Resolution:**

That Cabinet:

Part A

1. Approved the proposal of adopting a Community Lottery scheme to provide additional financial support to local organisations.

## Part B

1. Requested officers to approach Gatherwell to be the External Lottery Manager (ELM) to run the operational side of the lottery;
2. Agreed the criteria for which good causes should participate in the lottery, as detailed in sections 6 to 9;
3. Agreed the set-up costs of £5,200; and
4. Authorised the Chief Executive to agree named licence holders and to approve the appropriate policies and procedures.
5. Agreed that a report be presented to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel after 1 year for an update and a review of the scheme.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing reported he was aware that the subject had had mixed responses within Cabinet, however he was delighted to see the report seeking approval of a community lottery scheme. There had been detailed discussions at a Member Task and Finish Group and at Scrutiny Panel enabling questions and concerns to be raised and addressed by officers and the proposal had been supported. The lottery scheme would give people a choice of good causes to support in the District in a fun and responsible way. It would generate additional funding to local groups when funding streams were difficult to sustain.

The Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service highlighted the report provided an overview of how the lottery scheme would operate and that safeguards would be in place to ensure it was managed responsibly. Officers would work with an experienced External Lottery Manager, who was responsible for over 120 local authority community lottery schemes. These authorities had spoken positively about their lottery scheme and the benefits it brought. The scheme would enable income to be raised to support local community organisations in a sustainable way in the long term. If approval was granted, officers would work as quickly as possible to arrange implementation of the scheme.

A number of non-Cabinet members expressed their support to the scheme. A concern was raised regarding the possible saturation of the lottery market, and it was noted that a review was proposed to be carried out a year after operation. A question was also asked about the possible impact of devolution, given the time involved in setting

up the scheme. In response, the Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer services, recognised that work would be required to set it up, however once the lottery was in operation, it would require minimal officer input. It was reported to be a longer term legacy to support local groups. It was known that other authorities had gone through devolution and the lottery schemes had continued.

#### **4. Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028**

**Portfolio:** Community, Safety and Wellbeing

**Cabinet Resolution:**

That Cabinet approve the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 for formal consultation.

**Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing presented the Domestic Abuse Strategy. This recognised the high prevalence of domestic abuse and acknowledged that it was a matter often underreported and it had a devastating impact on individuals, families and the community. The Strategy had been aligned to the priorities in the Corporate Plan to help those in greatest need. Staff would be trained to help them identify domestic abuse as well enhance their response to any reports. Some council departments would have domestic abuse champions embedded within the services. It was anticipated this would help residents to live healthy lives in the community and to feel safe and supported.

The Service Manager – Community Safety & Support highlighted that the strategy identified four strategic priorities. Officers would be trained and there would be procedures and protocols in place to ensure that support could be provided to victims and appropriate action taken.

Non-Cabinet members welcomed the strategy and following points were made:

- Concern was raised about the ability of teams and different organisations involved to ensure that the support was available at the point it was identified for those who needed it;
- Early intervention and prevention was essential. More could be done to tackle the underlying issue;
- Domestic abuse was a complex issue. Misogynistic behaviours and attitudes could be developed, particularly with young people with

information being readily available online which needed to be addressed

The Service Manager – Community Safety and Support responded to the above points. It was confirmed that there were wrap around services to ensure that victims were protected and supported. It was acknowledged that there were various strands towards the prevention and early intervention of domestic abuse. Education was one area, and it was being provided through educational services in schools. This included working with the charity Yellow Door, which had delivered sessions in schools around healthy relationships and this work would continue for years to come.

Finally, in response to a non-Cabinet Member regarding the monitoring of the Strategy it was confirmed an Action Plan had been included as an Appendix, detailing the work which had been identified to deliver the key priorities. This would be monitored and updated and a report would be presented to the relevant panel to consider the progress of the strategy.

## **5. Corporate Plan: Key Performance Data for Quarters 1,2 and 3 2024-25**

**Portfolio:** Leader

### **Cabinet Resolution:**

That the Corporate Plan dashboards be approved.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Leader presented the report which detailed the performance against the Key Performance Indicators to support delivery of Corporate Plan for first 3 quarters of 2024/25. The report included feedback from each of the scrutiny panels. It was noted the good areas of delivery had been highlighted as well as targets which had been missed with a narrative to explain the reasons behind this as well as the proposed action to improve performance. This was key to how performance was managed to ensure that the council was on track to deliver its key priorities.

The Performance and Insight Manager further commented that the layout of the performance dashboards had been updated following feedback from the panels, with new headings and colour coding to make them more user friendly. The review of the Corporate Plan dashboards provides a sense check against the Corporate Plan commitments. It was noted that following approval the dashboards would be published on the Council's website. The dashboards provided

very detailed information within them, however, it was summarised that overall there was a pattern of an onward improvement journey which was encouraging to see.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability spoke about ID 25 relating to the number of fly tipping incidents reported in the District, which had received a green RAG rating. This was positive, however the Portfolio Holder felt that the number of incidents remained was too high and wanted to see it reduced further.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness welcomed the performance dashboards with details of targets and performance. He reported that work would continue to ensure that the amber targets, in particular were improved.

A non-Cabinet Member acknowledged that the performance monitoring was a tool to drive up improvement but felt that more could be done. This was acknowledged by the Performance and Insight Manager and it was reported that a Performance Management Framework had been developed with this in mind to ensure that performance was embedded within the organisation. Against each KPI there was a clear narrative around performance with mitigation controls in place. The performance was regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team, followed by consideration at the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

A non-Cabinet Member reported that the figure for the number of businesses in receipt of the newsletters was no longer a KPI. It was felt that it was important to measure this, particularly with devolution to ensure there was regular contact with local businesses and seek their views on matters of importance. The Chief Executive responded and explained the investment in the economic development service, which was a discretionary service, would address the Corporate Plan prosperity priority. A new member of staff, Jeannie Satchell had been appointed as the Economic Development Manager and her wealth of experience was highlighted at the meeting. She would be supported by another member of staff. It was therefore felt that the team would be able to ensure that there was good business engagement moving forwards.

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

### **6. People Strategy**

**Portfolio** – Leader and Finance and Corporate

**Recommended:**

That Council adopt the People Strategy.

**Cabinet Discussion:**

The Leader presented the People Strategy regarding how staff would be attracted work for the authority, how they would be retained and grown in order to support the ambition to be an employer of choice. Four themes had been identified: grow, connect, empower and strong roots. The Strategy would support a culture centred around the values of learning, empathy, ambition and fairness. It was recognised that the strategy had always been intended to be considered alongside the transformation programme and modernisation plans, however this was even more critical with local government review to ensure that staff were in a positive position with good skills for the future. An Action Plan had been developed and the timescales for delivery would be shorter with LGR, but the outcomes would continue with the aim of providing staff with opportunities for the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate acknowledged that the purpose of the District Council was to serve the residents and wider community and spoke about the greatest asset being that of staff and recognised the positive impact staff had on the local community and its residents. He was delighted to see the People Strategy being considered which would support staff in the exceptional work they carry out.

Non-Cabinet Members spoke in support of the People Strategy recognising the challenges staff would face in the uncertainty of LGR and the impact this could have on them and felt that all staff should have support during this time.

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



## **7. Digital Strategy**

**Portfolio:** Finance and Corporate

**Recommended:**

That Council adopt the Digital Strategy 2025-2028.

**Cabinet Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate introduced the item, acknowledging that digital services and ICT underpinned everything the council does; in how it operates and delivers services. One of the six principles was highlighted being, secure by design in order to protect the council's data, systems, people and residents against the risk of any cyber attack. The previous Digital Strategy had come to an end and the new Strategy had been reviewed in the light of LGR to ensure that it was robust and that it fits within the timeframe for the operation of the District Council.

The Data, Development and Delivery Manager thanked staff and members who had helped to shape the strategy. There was strong confidence in the six digital principles to help modernise and support digital skills in the delivery of other strategies. LGR had been considered and it would be necessary to remain agile moving forwards. The views expressed by the Portfolio Holder were echoed in relation to the cyber security threat and it was noted this would continue to evolve as the landscape changed. Proactive work would continue to ensure that data was protected and people were kept safe.

A non-Cabinet Member spoke in support of the Digital Strategy. The need to support and protect members of the community was highlighted, particularly those who were not digitally astute. It was acknowledged that some residents would not want to engage in the digital process and would require additional support, particularly as the council transforms and with the prospect of LGR. In response, it was confirmed that this had been considered as part of the strategy, not just through the introduction of new technology but to ensure that there were procedures in place to meet the needs of residents.

**Appendix 2 – Background Report to Cabinet**

## **8. Corporate peer challenge report and action plan**

**Portfolio:** Leader

### **Cabinet Resolution:**

1. That the LGA's feedback report be noted;
2. That the action plan be approved at Appendix 2 in response to the recommendations and observations contained within the feedback report;
3. That the revised key deliverables be approved at Appendix 3; and

### **Recommended:**

4. That having considered the views of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel, with regard to the motion, Cabinet recommend to Council that the process for selecting Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of Committees and Panels remain unchanged.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Leader reported that the LGA had been invited to the Council in December to undertake a Comprehensive Peer Challenge (CPC). This took place over three days and included over 40 meetings and the engagement of over 130 people, which involved staff, members and external stakeholders. It was long and comprehensive but was a rewarding process. It gave the opportunity to be open about what we think we do well and the areas for improvement. The feedback report received was positive and there were a number of observations. These had been reviewed and an Action Plan had been developed to embrace the observations as a learning opportunity, and this had been considered in light of LGR.

The Assistant Director – Transformation reported that the CPC gave the council an opportunity to learn. Those involved in the CPC had a wide reaching depth of experience from other authorities. The report identified opportunities for improvement with 10 recommendations as well as observations and these were set out in the report. A draft Action Plan had been prepared to respond to the recommendations and observations in a tangible way. It was highlighted that the Devolution White Paper had been published after the Peer Challenge and therefore the Action Plan had been framed with this in mind. One area which had been identified was the capacity to deliver the Corporate Plan priorities, in a timely way and the level of resources required over the next few years. Appendix 3 set out a review of the Corporate Plan key

deliverables in the new context and these would be kept under review. The next step would be to publish the report by 12 May and a follow up review would be set up for one year after the view, expected in early November.

Finally, the report detailed a motion received by Full Council which had been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel and this was detailed in paragraphs 18-21 of the report.

A number of non-Cabinet members made the following comments:

- It was disappointing that the chairmanship role to opposition members for overview and scrutiny panels was not one of the recommendations within the Action Plan, despite it being recognised within the CPC review;
- That scrutiny could be strengthened and improved with an opposition chairman;
- That a requirement for the position of chairman and vice-chairman to be nominated by members not from the ruling party was less democratic. It was not democratic for rules would be placed, so that only certain members would be eligible for these positions;
- That improvements were being made to strengthen scrutiny in a positive way ensuring that important topics were discussed and that they were presented in a comprehensive way.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate highlighted that the CPC had identified potential areas for improvement, including some new and interesting ideas which had not previously been considered. However, consideration needed to be given regarding whether those suggestions were right for the District Council.

The Leader reported that she felt there had been good engagement and discussion at the Panel meeting regarding the motion. This view was supported by the Chairman of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel who reported there had been a detailed discussion and that all members at the meeting had been able to express their views and have a fair say during the debate and vote.

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

## **9. Principal Risk and Risk Management Policy**

**Portfolio:** Leader / All

### **Recommended:**

1. That the Principal Risk Register and revised Risk Management Policy be adopted.

### **Cabinet Discussion:**

The Insurance and Risk Officer introduced the report, highlighting that the Risk Management Policy had been updated and a new Principal Risk Register had been developed to be more agile and responsive detailing the key risks faced by the Council. It would require updating as the LGR context evolves and as projects develop. The new Risk Management Policy and Principal Risk Register had been considered by the Audit Committee. Cabinet were asked to consider these and recommend the adoption by Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness commended officers on the updated policy and new risk register which was easy to follow and well structured.

Following a question about the review of the Principal Risk Register, it was confirmed that the Audit Committee would be asked to review it in six months and that this had been written into the supporting policy.

A non-Cabinet Member raised a concern on page 10 of the Risk Management Policy regarding the impact rating within the table, on the matter of morale. It was suggested that the move from low risk (identified as no effect), to moderate (with some hostile relationship and minor non cooperation) was too far apart and that there should be some middle ground between these two risks. It was suggested there needed to be a stage prior to reaching the moderate risk or to amend the text within the low risk.

The Insurance and Risk Officer responded to this point explaining that the rationale had been taken following best practice in risk management in the public sector and considered it to be fit for purpose. However, it was recognised to be ambiguous. The Chief Executive acknowledged the point raised and noted that other descriptions used words such as minor. It was suggested that the point be taken away for further review and consideration by officers.

A non-Cabinet member raised the issue of service provision detailed within the policy and the four levels of risk rating. It was felt that service evolution had not been addressed as services change over time. In response, it was highlighted that this would be expected to be

included within the Principal Risk Register as a risk rather than within the policy, as it related to the specific service risk, rather than the rationale behind it.

#### **Appendix 4 – Background Report to Cabinet**

This page is intentionally left blank

## Cabinet – 2 April 2025

## People Strategy

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>We have committed to the development of a people strategy to outline how we attract, retain, and grow talent.</p> <p>This people strategy describes our journey of 'employer of choice: grow connect empower' and a revised action plan following the publication of the Local Government White Paper to focus our work over the next two years.</p>
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<b>The Cabinet recommend to Council the adoption of the People Strategy by Council.</b>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and achieve a key milestone in the Transformation Strategy aligned to the People and Capabilities theme.</p> <p>Support readiness for change for local government reorganisation.</p> <p>EMT approved for delivery and resourcing.</p> <p>HR Committee approved 13 March 2025.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	<p>Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader</p> <p>Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate</p>
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director for Corporate Resource and Transformation
Officer Contact	<p>Kate Hardy</p> <p>Organisational Development and Change Specialist</p> <p>023 8028 5817</p> <p><a href="mailto:Kate.hardy@nfdc.gov.uk">Kate.hardy@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

	<p>Zoe Ormerod</p> <p>Senior HR Advisor</p> <p>02380285669</p> <p><a href="mailto:zoe.ormerod@nfdc.gov.uk">zoe.ormerod@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>
--	--

## Introduction

1. New Forest District Council's Corporate Plan and Transformation Strategy commit to the development of a people strategy to outline how we attract, retain, and grow talent.
2. This people strategy describes our approach to its development through discovery, design and delivery, allowing the strategy to evolve through engagement with staff.
3. The strategy aims to take NFDC on a journey towards Employer of Choice through the themes of grow, connect and empower, recognising there need to be strong roots (or foundations) in place, and our culture must be centred on our values of learning, empathy, ambition and fairness.
4. Following publication of the Local Government White Paper, we have taken time to reflect and the principles in the strategy remain relevant. The delivery plan has been refined to include the critical work programmes required over a shorter timeframe to modernise, and best position our staff for future opportunities whilst feeling supported and ready for change in local government reorganisation.
5. The strategy is presented as a metaphor based on the roots, branches and green leaves of a tree to provide an easily understandable visual and conceptual framework to support our journey. We believe a strong visual framework will allow more people to connect to the strategy in a meaningful way.
6. A simplified and more dynamic version of the people strategy has been designed, to ensure it is engaging for our staff as well as applicants as part of our offer to employees.

## Corporate plan priorities

7. The people strategy supports delivery of the Corporate Plan and Future New Forest programme.

## Consultation undertaken

8. Feedback from the 2024 staff survey and focus groups as well as HR Peer Review recommendations and informal feedback from individuals and groups have all been considered in the design of this strategy. The people strategy has been further developed with feedback from different groups of staff and has evolved through this engagement process. Groups included:



- a. leadership team
- b. EDI groups
- c. HR and comms teams
- d. change champions
- e. Employee Side Liaison Panel

### **Financial and resource implications**

- 9. Delivering the People Strategy has implications for both human and financial resources. Three additional roles have been identified to ensure effective delivery of the plan: organisational development facilitator; learning coordinator; and employee engagement officer.
- 10. In addition, a modest ringfenced budget for events, training, and other financial costs will be in place to support delivery of the strategy.

### **Risk assessment**

- 11. No formal risk assessment has been completed, however there is a significant risk to the organisation (in terms of retaining existing and recruiting new staff, and being ready for change) if we do not invest in our people.

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

- 12. The people strategy will be in support of the climate change programme, intending to create a sense of responsibility and accountability for our people to make changes aligned to becoming more sustainable. This element is captured implicitly across all four themes of strong roots, grow, connect and empower.

### **Equalities implications**

- 13. Equity is critical in the delivery of the people strategy and the values of empathy and fairness capture how this will be thread throughout. Equality impact assessments will be part of all deliverables to ensure that activities are fair and inclusive. Regular reviews will be conducted to ensure no unintended consequences/impact on staff become apparent.

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

- 14. Collecting and maintaining quality data about our workforce will be important to enable effective measurement of our success, whilst ensuring data usage complies with UK Regs and NFDC guidance.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – People Strategy

Appendix 2 – Simplified, designed and accessible version of people strategy



# People Strategy

Our journey to employer of choice: grow connect empower

February 2025

Version	Author	Date	Changes made
Final	Kate Hardy / Zoe Ormerod	28 January 2025	Updated content, action plan and shorter timescale to take account of local government reorganisation.
Final V2	Kate Hardy/ Zoe Ormerod	21 <sup>st</sup> February 2025	Updated points in our employer of choice commitment.

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Our three-phase approach .....	4
Discover .....	4
Design .....	4
Deliver .....	4
Key Findings .....	6
What we're doing well .....	6
Challenges .....	7
Employer of choice .....	11
Our journey to employer of choice .....	12
Grow .....	13
Connect .....	14
Empower .....	15
Strong roots .....	16
Culture .....	17
Delivery plan .....	18
Monitoring and governance .....	23
Measuring our ambition to be an employer of choice .....	24

# Introduction

New Forest District Council's Corporate Plan and Transformation Strategy commit to the development of a People Strategy to outline how we attract, retain, and grow talent. The strategy provides the direction towards achieving our ambition as an 'employer of choice' and to guide the organisation in:

- how we engage our people, ensuring that every member of our team feels part of the organisation and feels valued for the contribution they make to the community and our organisational goals.
- investing in our people to ensure we have the skills we need to deliver the changes we must make and the work that makes a difference to our community,
- creating the conditions to enable change through our values, behaviours, and culture.

We know that when our people are at their best, we are most able to achieve our strategic aims. This strategy is a proactive framework, to create enhanced commitment, engagement and motivation, plan for future workforce requirements, and build capacity and competence to deliver for our communities today and in the future.

The likely changes arising from the local government white paper mean that the focus on our people is more important than ever. Through this strategy we will support our employees during significant change and position them with the right skills and behaviours to embrace future opportunities.

A three-phase approach has been taken to creating this strategy: Discover; Design; Deliver. The process of discovery and design has taken place over an 18-month period from the design of the corporate plan and transformation strategy, with new evidence and staff feedback brought together to create an engaging and ambitious plan for our people.

## Our three-phase approach

### Discover

The 'discovery' phase of the strategy development consisted of a period of evidence collection both internally and externally, from information already available as well as the collection of new evidence, for example from staff feedback. A comprehensive report describes the evidence in detail and the key findings have been extracted and summarised in the **Key Findings** section.

### Design

Several key themes and principles emerged from the evidence collected in the discovery phase. These key themes alongside informal research on best practice through networks, people strategies from other similar organisations, webinars, and existing informal knowledge of best practice and experience of what has worked in ours and other organisations have also informed the design of the strategy.

The design process has been iterative, with initial themes and principles presented to a number of staff groups to test out the ideas and gauge reactions and understanding. Feedback supported the design of a simpler, snappier concept that is more accessible and understandable to all. Words that resonated for people were elevated and a visual representation created, to make it more memorable.

**The strategy** aims to take us on a journey to be an Employer of Choice through the themes of grow, connect and empower, recognising there need to be strong roots (or foundations) in place, and our culture must be centred on our values of learning, empathy, ambition and fairness.

### Deliver

An **action plan** to deliver the outcomes in the strategy, aligned to the themes of grow, connect and empower has been designed with flexibility in mind, with implementation in two phases of establishing foundations and building our capabilities. An outline delivery plan is included in this document, with more detailed project plans to be created for the evolving organisational needs.

The delivery of the strategy will have a strong **governance** structure in place, aligned to the transformation programme, to ensure work is completed, unblock any challenges, maintain communication with key stakeholders, monitor outputs and measure success. Measuring the success of a people strategy is complex and there are many interdependent factors. The list of measures used in the delivery plan is extensive and reflects the complexity involved, with the combination creating an overall picture. The individual measures provide opportunity to address issues at a more granular level.

# Key Findings

A summary of the key challenges faced, identified from the national and local context, are described below and set out what the people strategy must address. It is appropriate to first highlight the areas where New Forest District Council is already doing well, to ensure we recognise and build on existing good practice and strengths.

## What we're doing well

**Corporate plan.** There is very good awareness and understanding of the corporate plan and the three pillars of place, people and prosperity. This understanding of the vision and purpose of the organisation provides clear direction and an excellent foundation for the people strategy.

**Wellbeing support.** Health and wellbeing support is appreciated and many have benefited from support when off sick, returning to work, with mental health concerns and from reasonable adjustments when needed.

**Teams.** Cohesion within small teams is clear, staff feel very connected within their teams and value colleague support.

**Line management support.** There are a number of excellent line managers across the organisation and those teams with good line manager support clearly benefit. The brief bites sessions support managers to learn best practice. Informal resolution of issues is high when supported by the HR team.

**Recruitment.** Significant improvements have been made in recruitment in the last 12 months. New employees recently going through the recruitment process are providing high praise for the warmth of the staff, the overall process, and the information provided, specifically the new application packs.

**Early careers.** A steadily growing number of apprentices and graduate trainees have been recruited and developed across our organisation. The individuals in these roles are usually successful and often stay.

**Existing staff.** The people who work for us are committed to the organisation and the community it serves and want to do the best job possible. They thrive on being experts in their areas, whilst also showing a keen appetite for change to make things better for the organisation and the community.

## Challenges

### **Recruitment and retention**

There are national recruitment and retention issues in local government, with skills shortages in specific areas such as planning and environmental health. These challenges are reflected in the new forest area and across the South East too. With an average age of 48, our workforce is ageing and we have many staff who are moving towards retirement. This ageing workforce reflects a national picture. Worryingly (although the national picture is not dissimilar) 28% of new starters left within 12 months of joining us as an employee. Alongside this, local government is not widely seen as an attractive sector to work in, and nationally the 'Make a Difference, Work for your Local Council' campaign aims to inspire individuals to explore career opportunities in local government that have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of local residents, capitalising on the growing trend for people to seek work that contributes to society. The Devolution White Paper requiring local government reorganisation may impact on our ability to attract and retain talent.

Despite the pay and terms of conditions of employment being determined by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services, our pay terms remain different than the nationally agreed pay scales and may create additional challenges in recruitment and retention.

### **Diversity and inclusion**

Our staff tell us that we are inclusive. Our workforce data tells us that we lack diversity. Whilst we are attracting increasingly more diverse applicants (diversity of age and ethnicity), these appear to not pull through to hires. It is therefore unclear whether we are truly inclusive to more diverse colleagues.



Our male to female ratio is similar to the majority of local government organisations and our gender pay gap is low. However, there are significant differences in the ratio of men and women in middle management, with fewer women entering into those leadership roles.

4% of our staff have declared a long-term condition or disability. When compared to 16.1% of New Forest residents, and 17.8% in England and Wales, this indicates either low disclosure rates or lower than average numbers of staff employed who have a disability or long term condition.

## **Learning and careers**

The apprenticeship levy is a key source of funding which can be used to support career development and this pot could be utilised more fully. Skills England will take over responsibility for the levy in 2025 and it is expected there will be significant changes in how this levy can be used which could enable us to offer new learning and career opportunities.

Many staff cite better prospects of career progression as a key reason for leaving, and this is reflected in the recent staff survey where only 31% agreed that they saw a career path for them in the organisation. In addition, other benefits and opportunities for training and development showed room for improvement. Our average training spend per employee in 2023-4 was £314. Although this is an important figure, there are many other opportunities to learn and develop, away from traditional paid courses and exploration of how we identify and support these opportunities will be important.

Feedback shows inconsistency in personal development opportunities with 72% completion of performance reviews as well as anecdotal feedback that performance review templates needed modernising and focusing on conversations.

## **Culture**

For people who have worked in our organisation for a longer period, there is some legacy culture that is challenging, where some can feel fearful of making mistakes and therefore feel unable to make decisions, often deferring them upwards, which comes from a previous approach of centralised control. This has now changed positively with a new chief executive, and will take time and demonstrable examples to continue to change towards a more open and innovative organisation.

There have been some concerns raised around unacceptable behaviour and inappropriate language being used, and the feedback from the staff survey indicated that 40% of respondents were not confident that if they reported poor behaviour, it would be dealt with appropriately.

In seeing the first waves of transformational change, there is evidence to suggest that resilience and readiness for change is low, despite there being appetite for change. This is perhaps a result of limited experience of change for many staff who have worked in our organisation for a number of years.

## **Leadership and management**

As described in the areas we are doing well in, we have some excellent managers, however, this is not a consistent view, with variable management practices taking place across the organisation, with a lack of clear expectations of managers.

Leadership development opportunities introduced in 2023/4 have been well received. It is important that leadership development isn't seen as a one off and there are new and ongoing opportunities to develop existing and future leaders, as there is more work to be done to develop the leadership capabilities of the future. One example is the feedback that there is a lack of accountability and autonomy, where 28% of respondents in the staff survey felt people were not held to account. It is a key leadership role to support appropriate accountability, decision making and autonomy.

## **Communication**

There is much evidence and knowledge that there is a culture of silo working within the organisation, with examples of people working in the same office for many years having never met each other. There is a lack of open and collaborative working, with potential for projects and work to happen without key stakeholders involved. This seems to stem from a reluctance to being open and sharing expertise and information with others and is a challenge which can come from close knit small teams who can sometimes become introspective. There are limited opportunities for different groups of people to get together around a common interest or topic.

Although much information is available somewhere, there is a lack of easy to access information, guidance, reports that people need, as well as a lack of consistent messaging across the workforce by appropriate methods, for example the over reliance on e-mail to send messages to all staff, when a percentage of staff don't have any access to e-mails or ForestNet. It is unclear whether these messages get through at all to those people, so there is a need to create engaging and relevant communications which reach all staff. A perception of 'them and us' between the main office at Appletree Court and the depot bases is perhaps an example of the impact of this communication approach.

# Employer of choice

Identifying what makes people choose to work for an organisation is complex and unique to individuals, based on personal motivations and values. Using the evidence and research collected in the discovery phase, we have defined our concept of being an employer of choice and therefore the outcomes we are aiming for through this people strategy.

To be considered as an employer of choice, we:

- attract and retain the best people.
- learn and develop in our roles and our careers, performing to our best ability.
- are recognised and rewarded for the contributions we make.
- have the confidence to put forward ideas, try out new concepts and take actions within clear boundaries and expectations.
- work together with our colleagues across the organisation, partners and community.
- include everyone and encourage a strong sense of belonging.
- know how our work makes a difference to the community we serve.
- are open, sharing our experiences, and learning from each other.
- fairly and consistently apply our processes and practices.

## Our journey to employer of choice

# Employer of Choice: grow connect empower

Our people strategy provides the direction needed, to take our organisation on a journey towards our ambition to be an Employer of Choice.

This work is important to our people and it is vital to ensure our approach is recognised and understood by everyone.

Our strategy of 'Employer of choice: grow connect empower' is presented as a metaphor based on the roots, branches and green leaves of a tree, and is relevant to the New Forest, the area we serve. We believe a strong visual framework will allow more people to connect to the strategy in a meaningful way to support our journey and enable existing staff and potential recruits to see how we are transforming our offer for people.



The branches of grow, connect and empower, capture the focus of our work, recognising there also need to be strong roots (or foundations) in place. Our culture, the way we do things which enable us to achieve our desired outcomes, must be centred on our values of learning, empathy, ambition and fairness.

Each of these elements are described in more detail below.

## Grow

We believe that everyone should have opportunities to grow. We will all be able to learn, develop and contribute to our organisation in ways wider than our core roles and see career opportunities that excite us.

We will ensure everyone has access to protected time for learning and development activities, support people to move internally where relevant, and provide open access to a menu of learning activities, including core transferable skills, as well as offer targeted development for specific groups. This will include ongoing leadership and management development offers, ways for people to obtain skills fit for the future, and building personal development plans to support this, with regular and meaningful development conversations.

Our learning and development offer includes early career or entry opportunities, professional qualifications where appropriate and continuing professional development at all career stages.

We will identify future skills needs, opportunities for sharing of knowledge and best practice and support for people to move forward in their careers. We know that some people will move on during this period of significant change, and we aim to support people to leave well, with a positive experience and skills to benefit the New Forest and wider community going forward.

## Connect

Whilst recognising individual, team and role differences, it's important to us that we are all connected. No matter where we work or our job role, we will feel part of a team, have opportunities to get involved, feedback our thoughts and ideas, and find out about what's happening in the organisation and in the wider geography.

We must be transparent in our approach, ensuring everyone has access the information and advice they need to do their job and to spark their interests.

To do this, we will enhance our engagement and internal communication methods across the organisation, promoting our successes, collaborating internally and externally, and generally find ways to better connect.

We will support both functional and matrix teams to connect and develop together through focused activities, and create more opportunity for individuals to connect with others who they affiliate with, by increasing our staff networks and peer support. This could include young people, those in early careers, people living with disabilities, women in leadership, and/or the global majority.

We will look outward and align our activities with local government partner organisations where it makes sense to, better connecting with our members, other partners and community too. We will enhance our reputation as a great employer as well as an ambitious and effective organisation through our connections with partners and the public. Our focus on putting customers at the heart of all we do will require us to be more proactive and engaging and our staff will be supported to develop these skills.

## Empower

People will be supported to make the decisions, undertake the learning, and test out the things that truly matter to them and are appropriate, giving people autonomy over their work. We want people to want to come to work, know they are doing meaningful work, and have a clear purpose. All our staff will feel safe, both physically and psychologically, and therefore able to bring their best selves to work.

Through our 'grow' branch, our programme of transformational learning opportunities will empower people to use digital technology, manage change effectively, focus on customers and take an active role in reversing climate change. Making more use of digital technology with enhanced access and skills to enable automated decision making where relevant, will empower people to focus on those interactions and decisions which are complex and sensitive and where humanity is key. We will also continue to review our processes to ensure we complete our work in the most effective and efficient ways.

Support and development of our various 'champions' networks are key to empowering those who are most engaged to make the impact that is important to them, enhancing their roles in the organisation.

We will enable people to feel empowered to find their own learning and solutions which will help unlock individual potential and maximise performance. This will be supported through access to coaching, mentoring and peer learning.



## Strong roots

Our roots are centred on our values which flow through the branches of our organisation and create the culture we are aiming for.

With employees as our most important asset, all employees should feel this is the best place for them to work. To achieve this, we must have clear processes and expectations which are applied fairly and consistently, providing the stability that holds up the organisation.

Our behaviours framework, once developed, will set out the expectations for how we all want to be treated and treat others at work, as well as ensure a customer and community focus across all of our work, and create the conditions for effective change management.

We must also review the language and approaches in our critical workforce and other policies and procedures, to create a safe environment for people to be able to join us and thrive.

Our recognition scheme will seek out and celebrate individual and team contributions aligned to our values and organisational aims.

We proactively support wellbeing and resilience, with effective and compassionate support when people most need it, knowing that this approach pays back in effort and contributions at other times.

## Culture

Culture describes how we go about our day-to-day work, the elements that you can't see, the norms, beliefs, systems and rules that influence our behaviour at work.

Our LEAF values are strong and recognisable, and coupled with our ambition for strong roots, growth, connection, and empowerment, these describe the influences we want people to listen to and the culture we want to see throughout our organisation.

We will embark on a culture development programme to thread our values through everything we do and put us on the front foot in readiness for local government reorganisation. Culture change is not a quick fix, it takes time and energy, and we are committed to the journey.

The overall picture that our measures provide, will be used to assess the impact of our cultural change programme which runs through all the deliverables featured under the themes of grow, connect, empower, and strong roots. We will also assess whether staff would recommend our organisation as a place to work as a key benchmark internally and against similar organisations.

# Delivery plan

Our delivery plan is broken down by our themes of grow, connect, empower and strong roots, each of which has two parts to the timeline: establishing foundations (year 1); and building our capabilities (year 2).

## Strong Roots

Theme	Purpose	Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
strong roots	Fit for future	Improve transactional HR processes, including recruitment and internal job moves. Create more guidance and information to support people to self serve to reduce HR contacts for highest volume enquiries.	Review	Review	Amend	Amend				
strong roots	Culture and behaviours	Develop and launch a behaviours framework and tools to support implementation, including develop and launch a refreshed staff recognition scheme aligned to our values and behaviours.	develop	launch	embed	embed	BAU	BAU	BAU	BAU
strong roots	Fit for future	Develop an organisational change management approach and toolkit to include tools, templates, guidance.	develop	develop and	embed	embed				
strong roots	Fit for future	Research and create staff personas to support targeted interventions across all aspects of the people strategy, e.g. internal comms, learning opportunities, ways to connect, wellbeing.								
strong roots	Fit for future	Establish core transformation competencies and create learning opportunities to upskill where needed. May include self awareness, managing change, customer service, systems thinking, co-production.	research	develop framework	launch learning	learning	learning	learning		

Theme	Purpose	Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
strong roots	Culture and behaviours Learning and development	Create leadership and management competency framework and develop learning opportunities to support leaders and managers to reflect upon and achieve competencies and bring our values and behaviours to life.			develop	develop and launch	learning	learning	learning	learning
strong roots	Fit for future	Identify and review key people policies where essential to reflect employment law and organisational changes.	Review and plan	review and update key policies as per plan						
strong roots	Fit for future	Improve workforce data quality and create service dashboards to support baseline measurement and empowerment of managers, as well as be devolution ready.	develop	develop	develop	develop	implement	implement	implement	implement

Grow

Theme	Purpose	Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
grow	Learning and development	Review and develop mandatory course matrix by staff groups.								
grow	Recruitment and retention. Learning and Development	Continue to utilise, and enhance coordination and management for successful apprenticeships and other development opportunities for existing staff, new recruits and hard to fill roles. E.g. young authority of the year, DCN management programme, projects.								
grow	Learning and development	Review and update appraisals and 1:1 processes to include behaviours framework and better support personal development planning, allowing for a flexible approach as we navigate change. To include clear guidance, training, and recording expectations.			review and plan	implement	implement			

## Connect

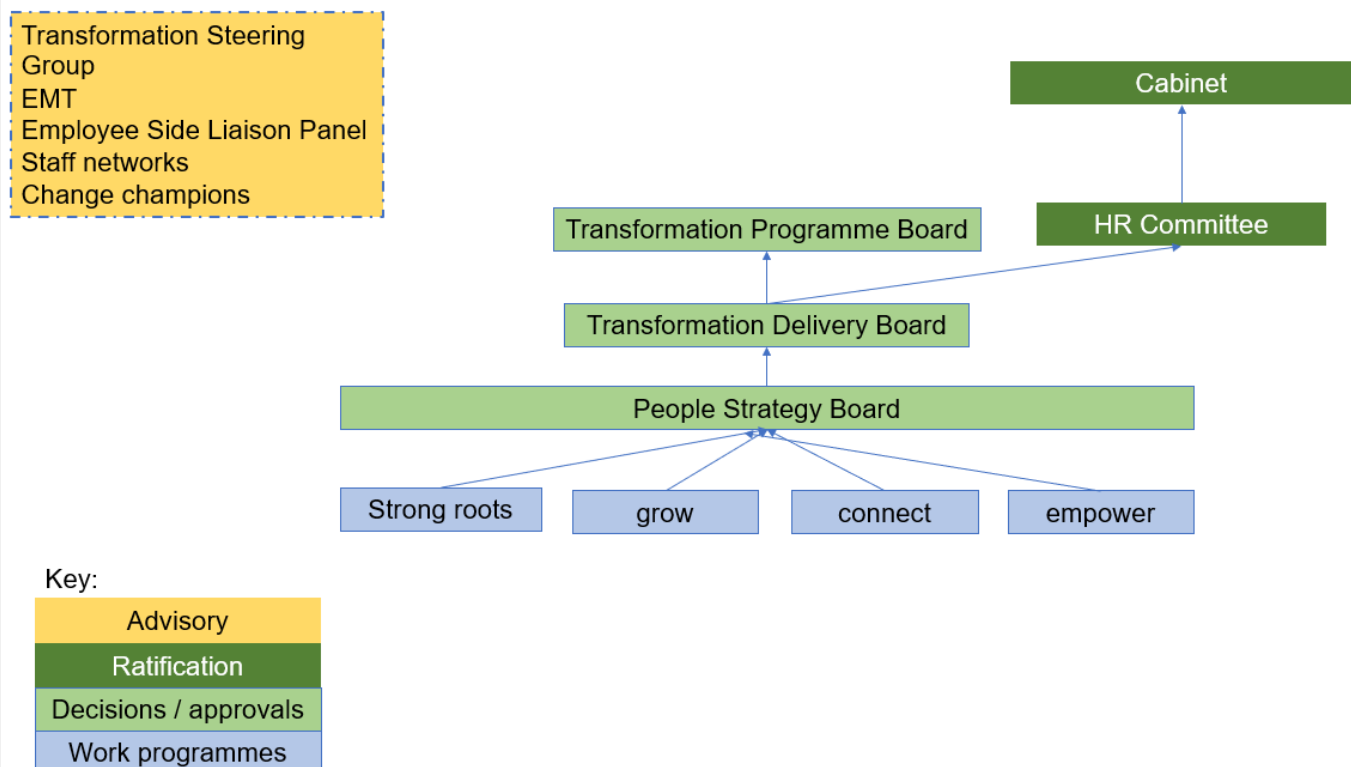
Theme	Purpose	Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
connect	Engagement and Communications	Review, enhance and measure internal communication and engagement channels, media, purpose and messaging. To include content creation (corporate presentations, written briefings etc), a clear plan of campaigns which run aligned to the people strategy, with appropriate staff surveys to test engagement and identify new actions. To include a regular campaign to raise awareness of wellbeing resources.	Review	Review	launch new approach					
connect	Engagement and Communications	Enhance staff intranet with accessible and engaging content.		Design approach	Content review and creation with services	Content review and creation with services	Content review and creation with services	Content review and creation with services		
Connect	Engagement and Communications Culture and behaviours	Create new and develop existing peer forums / staff networks / learning circles / collaboration cafes (both diversity and role related).								

## Empower

Theme	Purpose	Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
empower	Fit for future Learning and development	Implement a 'Digital Skills for All' programme.	plan	plan	Implement					
empower	Engagement and Communications Learning and Development	Create a learning hub. To include a menu of opportunities, detailed guidance for staff on learning and development opportunities and process to access and record.								
empower	Learning and development Culture and behaviours	Provide coaching, mentoring, buddy and shadowing opportunities. To include training in coaching and mentoring, guidance for buddying and shadowing, a hub of information on sharepoint to show opportunities available and contact details.								
empower	Learning and development	Develop a menu of targeted learning opportunities for different staff groups, for example a people managers essentials programme for first line chargehands and supervisors. Learning needs to be identified via skills audits and identification of staff personas.	Dependent on need. People management for chargehands and supervisors required Year 1, Q1							

# Monitoring and governance

It is critical that the programme of work in support of our journey to create strong roots, grow, connect, and empower, is monitored, measured and governed appropriately. This strategy forms an important part of the Future New Forest transformation programme and will align with the governance structures already defined as the diagram shows below.



A full programme plan, and individual project plans will be developed and maintained to keep track of actions, and create accountability. The People Strategy Board will meet monthly and report to transformation delivery and programme boards as required, with reports to HR Committee ad hoc as and when ratification is required for specific initiatives or changes.



## Measuring our ambition to be an employer of choice

A set of measures will be collected annually to review progress year on year towards our ambition to become employer of choice, against each outcome. The Local Government 'employee engagement index' (LGEEI) is a set of core questions that will enable us to benchmark ourselves against other similar organisations in the sector and are included within these measures.

Outcome	Key Measures
Are included and have a strong sense of belonging.	% of staff would recommend the council as a great place to work
	% staff satisfied with the amount of information they receive about what is going on at the council
	% staff receive the information they need to do their job well
	% staff feel well informed about things that affect them at work
	% staff agree they have the freedom to work in a way which suits them
	% staff believe the council has sufficient wellbeing support in place for staff
	% staff agree they can strike the right balance between work and home life
	% staff feel well supported by their line manager
	% of staff subjected to bullying and harassment at work
	% of working time lost due to sickness absence
	% of staff agree the Council is open minded, accepting of differences, and everyone is made to feel included
	% of staff agree they can be themselves at work
	% of staff feel treated with fairness and respect at work
Are open, sharing our experiences, and learning from each other.	% staff feel confident to freely share any work issues with their colleagues/team.
	% staff response to staff survey
	% staff agree that any suggestions or comments they make are listened to
	% staff who agree that if they have any problems or concerns, they feel able to discuss them with their line manager / supervisor
	% of staff confident that any reported inappropriate behaviour by colleagues whilst at work, would be dealt with appropriately
	% of staff agree that the leadership team have a good understanding of the challenges staff face
	% of staff agree that in their team, mistakes are seen as learning opportunities
	Analytics of sharepoint usage
	% of workplace issues / employee relations cases resolved informally
Are recognised and rewarded for the contributions we make.	% staff agree that their manager gives them regular feedback on performance
	% staff agree they are praised and recognised for good work
	% staff feel valued and rewarded fairly for the work they do

Outcome	Key Measures
Attract and retain the best people.	% turnover
	Agency use
	Diversity of our workforce (gender, age, ethnicity, disability)
	% of staff who leave within 12 months
	Number of workplace issues / employee relations cases (to include conduct, capability, grievance, disciplinary)
	Gender pay gap (and Race, Disability pay gap if feasible)
	% vacancies filled first time
	Diversity of job applicants
	Number of job applications per campaign
Have the confidence to put forward ideas, try out new concepts and take actions within clear boundaries and expectations.	% of managers agree they are empowered to manage resources to deliver their target outcomes.
	% staff feel able to contribute to improvements in their area of work
	% staff encouraged to try new tasks to develop and improve
	% staff feel able to approach the leadership team if needed
	% staff agree they clearly understand what is expected of them
	% of staff feel trusted to do their work in the way they think is best
	% staff agree that all employees are held accountable for their personal performance and contribution
Learn and develop in our roles and our careers, performing to our best ability.	% of staff with a personal development plan in place
	% who agree they have had the training and development needed to perform current duties
	% staff agree there are training and development opportunities to support them to achieve their ambitions / progress their career
	Number of apprenticeships and other early career placements
	Average learning / development activity per head
	Training spend per head
	% of roles filled by internal candidates
	% completion of mandatory training
	% staff agree they have the skills and equipment to do their jobs
Work together with our colleagues across the Council, partners and community.	% staff feel that in their team, they help and support each other
	% staff agree that their manager / supervisor encourages them to work collaboratively with other colleagues and departments to achieve own / organisational objectives
	% staff feel that they work well across teams on shared objectives
	% staff who agree that we put our community and service users at the heart of what we do
	% of staff who believe their work makes a difference to the organisation / community
	% of staff who agree that we deliver a great service to residents and the community



# People Strategy



Our journey to employer of choice





# Foreword



**Cllr Jill Cleary**  
Leader of the Council



**Kate Ryan**  
Chief Executive

As part of the council's ongoing transformation programme, 'Future New Forest, transforming tomorrow together', we are committed to being an employer of choice. A fundamental part of this is developing and delivering a people strategy that outlines how we attract, retain, and grow our talent, giving us direction to deliver for our employees as well as for our community.

The strategy is based on a wealth of evidence from a wide range of sources: from data and feedback from our current workforce; to external reviews and best practice from both within and outside local government. We aim to be agile to enable us to react to current trends and be fit for future changes.

Underpinning the strategy is the development of our positive work culture, through our LEAF values, with a new behaviours framework to show how we live our values and foster a strong sense of belonging at work.

Our journey to employer of choice: Grow Connect, Empower, is represented visually as a tree with people at the heart, where we start with strong roots, build on these through the branches of Grow, Connect, and Empower, culminating in our LEAF culture which flows through all we do.

Our strategy document describes our strong roots and branches with why they are important, what we do well, what we aim to

achieve and how each will be measured and reviewed. These will continually evolve as new opportunities and challenges emerge.

We firmly believe that having the best staff, who are well-supported, is key to delivering the best outcomes for our residents.

We are committed to developing our people to be fit for the future, and this strategy enables us to achieve this in a context of significant change, as well as deliver our corporate plan priorities for the communities we serve.



# The purpose of our people strategy



138

Our Corporate Plan and Transformation Strategy commit to the development of a people strategy to outline how we attract, retain, and grow talent.

The people strategy provides the direction to guide the organisation in how we:

- engage our people
- invest in our people
- create the conditions to enable change

## **Engaging our people**

It is important that every member of our team feels part of the organisation and feels valued for the contribution they make to the community and our corporate plan objectives.

## **Investing in our people**

This is about ensuring we have the skills we need to deliver the changes we must enable and the work that makes a difference to our community.

## **Creating the conditions to enable change**

Continuously applying our values, behaviours, and culture.

The focus on our people is more important than ever. Through this strategy we will support our employees during significant change and position them with the right skills and behaviours to embrace future opportunities.

We know that when our people are at their best, we will be best placed to meet our strategic aims.

It is a proactive framework, to enable enhanced commitment, engagement and motivation, plan for future workforce requirements, build capacity and competence to deliver current and future requirements for our communities.

# How our people strategy sits within our council

139

Our people strategy aligns with our overarching corporate plan and fits with the 'people and capabilities' theme in our transformation strategy.

The people strategy links closely to the other themes within the transformation strategy; 'customer and digital', 'assets and accommodation', and 'finances & delivery' ensuring all our colleagues are working towards shared goals, with clear expectations and the resources they need to succeed.



Read our corporate plan at:

[link to document](#)



Read our transformation strategy at:

[link to document](#)

# The process of creating our people strategy

140



## Discovery

During this phase, we collected data, research, and feedback. Our sources included:

- our corporate and HR peer reviews
- staff feedback, including leadership team, staff groups, and staff survey
- our corporate plan, transformation plan, and LEAF values
- external sources and best practice



## Design

At this phase, we developed initial themes and principles using our findings from stage 1 with the inclusion of our corporate values.

Through an iterative process, the initial themes and principles were presented to multiple staff groups to gain insight into their understandings and reactions.

Feedback supported the design of a simpler and concise concept that is more accessible and understandable to all.



## Delivery

Using the core themes of grow, connect, and empower, a 2-year action plan has been created.

We will ensure outputs are monitored, communication with key stakeholders is maintained, and progress and successes are measured.



# What we're doing well as a council

## Staff support

When asked, our staff say we care about their wellbeing, they have positive relationships with their managers, and that they enjoy working in our organisation. We know that there is strong cohesion within small teams and many agree that they help and support each other.

## Early careers

We have been growing our early career roles to develop new skills in some of our hard to recruit areas. At the launch of this strategy we had the highest ever number of apprenticeships and our first graduate trainees across our services.

## Commitment to our purpose

Our staff have a good awareness and understanding of the corporate plan and values and a strong sense that their work makes a difference to the organisation and community.

## Recruitment

New employees are providing positive feedback on the overall recruitment process, the warmth of the staff, and the information provided, specifically our improved application packs.



We actively collaborate with local learning providers to build relationships with young talent and promote ourselves as a key local employer.

This includes attending careers fairs and supporting apprenticeships, providing students with insight into council roles and career paths.

In 2024, we were recognised as Brockenhurst College's "Employer of the Year" recognising our commitment to developing our brand and networks.



# What challenges we need to address

## Engagement and collaboration

**The challenge:** connection between individuals and teams, access to information, and the ability for corporate communications to reach all parts of the organisation is limited in some areas, holding back our people from sharing information, ideas and best practice, and learning from each other.

## Skills

**The challenge:** national recruitment issues, an ageing workforce, fast moving technology, and skills gaps in some professional areas, mean we must grow and develop both our new and existing staff.

## Learning and careers

**The challenge:** opportunities for career progression and a lack of clear personal development opportunities and career pathways are a particular challenge presented by our staff survey feedback.

## Management practices

**The challenge:** a lack of clear expectations of managers has led to variable practices across the organisation, with an additional need to further develop our leaders and managers to face the challenges of change over the next few years.

# Defining what employer of choice means to us

Using the evidence collected in the discovery phase, we have defined our concept of being an employer of choice.

To us this means we will:

- attract and retain the best people
- learn and develop in our roles and our careers, performing to our best ability
- be recognised and rewarded for the contributions we make
- work together with our colleagues across the council, partners and community
- include everyone and encourage a strong sense of belonging
- have the confidence to put forward ideas, try out new concepts and take actions within clear boundaries and expectations
- know how our work makes a difference to the community we serve
- be open, sharing our experiences, and learning from each other
- fairly and consistently apply our processes and practices



Our corporate values are already established. Collectively known as 'LEAF', our values underpin the culture and behaviours we are aiming for, to achieve our commitment to becoming an employer of choice.

**Learning**

**Empathy**

**Ambition**

**Fairness**

# Our journey to employer of choice

This journey will be led by our 4 themes,  
and they are:

Strong roots

Grow

Connect

Empower





# The 4 themes:

## 1. Strong roots

### Strong roots

Our roots are centred on our values which flow through the branches of our organisation and create the culture we are aiming for.

With employees as our most important asset, all employees should feel this is the best place for them to work. We will achieve this through clear processes and expectations which are applied fairly and consistently, by proactively supporting wellbeing and resilience, by promoting our behaviours framework which sets out the expectations for how we all want to be treated and treat others at work, and by recognising and celebrating when individuals and teams align with our values.



# Spotlight: Strong roots

Meet 4 of our colleagues who have shared how they recognise themselves or their work in our values.

146



## Learning

**Andy Rowe, waste & recycling supervisor:**

"I am embracing all learning opportunities. Since joining the Waste & Recycling team, I have moved from Refuse Loader through to HGV Driver, then Senior Chargehand and I have just been successful in a promotion to Supervisor. Without the learning opportunities both formal and on the job I would not have been able to reach this potential".



## Empathy

**Christina Morgan, housing allocations officer:**

"In my role I feel empathy is essential, many people have had difficult and complicated lives and, as a result of this, can be difficult to engage with or have difficulties understanding the processes we need to go through in order to re-house them.

I make sure I take time to be patient and listen to people when they talk which enables me to get a better understanding of them and their situation. I am always mindful that I do my job every day, but the person I am dealing with, is going through the process of being housed potentially for the first time and does not know what to expect".



## Ambition

**Kasia Lewis, homelessness prevention officer:**

"I still feel there is more to give and achieve in my role. I am keen to take on more responsibility and I feel well supported by my managers to expand my role and responsibilities. I believe NFDC are an employer that nurtures ambition and provides support to move and change within the organisation."



## Fairness

**Phil Thompson, environmental health officer:**

"The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme helps our residents choose where to eat out or shop for good food by giving them clear information about a business's hygiene standards. As a national standard, businesses and customers alike can have confidence in its openness and fairness".



# The 4 themes:

## 2. Grow

### Grow

We believe that everyone should have the opportunities to develop, with protected time for learning and development activities for current and future skills needs.

This will include core transferable skills as well as targeted development, early career opportunities, qualifications and continuing professional development at all career stages.

We will create positive learning experiences to benefit our people and the wider community.



# Spotlight: Grow



Here's Ned, who joined us as an apprentice in 2022, he has now completed his Accounting Level 3 apprenticeship and has been successful in securing a further training contract to complete the Level 4. Ned said "Completing my level 3 AAT apprenticeship has allowed me to gain a professional qualification whilst also working alternate weeks for the Sundry Income Team and the Service Accountancy Team." He continues, "Upon completion of my level 3 apprenticeship, I have taken up the Junior Finance Assistant role and I am now working towards my level 4 AAT qualification. Overall, I have grown in confidence throughout my time at New Forest District Council and enjoy the varied job role having the opportunity to work for two separate departments".

Pam and Ned's line managers both agree that they are developing into important members of the team, helping to ensure our services are delivered in a professional and timely way. They have the time and opportunity to learn and develop, but they also bring new ideas and learning back to help evolve how both teams move forward.



Meet Pam Zuva, currently undertaking a degree apprenticeship with us in Environmental Health. Pam is mid-way in year two, and loving the development opportunity with us. She was key to the NFDC stand at the New Forest Show, helping educate visitors on food safety with her new knowledge. Pam said "It was an honour to share my newly acquired knowledge and instil awareness of the importance of food hygiene." She continues, "The simple practical activity of identifying hazards in the fridge enabled me to encourage the children and their guardians to reconsider how this could positively impact their health. The activity became popular at the NFDC stand and I am grateful to have contributed to our community in such a meaningful way".



# The 4 themes:

## 3. Connect

### Connect

Whilst recognising individual, team and role differences, it's important that we are all connected. No matter where we work or our job role, we will feel part of a team, have opportunities to get involved, feedback our thoughts and ideas, find out about what's happening in the organisation and in the wider geography, and have access to the information and advice we need to do our jobs well.

We will enhance engagement across the organisation, promoting our successes, collaborating internally and externally with all stakeholders, increasing our staff networks and peer support, and generally find ways to better connect in an open and transparent way.

Colleagues out on one of our regular wellbeing walks







# Spotlight: Connect

We celebrated with over 50 colleagues who have worked here for 20 years or more; our longest serving colleague having 44 years of service! We have a brilliant mix of long serving employees as well as those who have joined us more recently with their external experience to bring to the mix.



# The 4 themes:

## 4. Empower

### Empower

People will be supported to make decisions, test out new ideas, and find their own learning and solutions. We want people to feel empowered, have autonomy and enjoy their work, therefore bringing their best selves to work, unlocking individual potential and maximising performance.

With appropriate training we will make better use of digital technology to ensure we complete our work in the most effective and efficient ways. We will support and develop our various 'champions' networks as well as providing access to coaching, mentoring and peer learning.



Here's Sophie presenting at the Young Authority of the Year competition, an empowering opportunity to develop and showcase her skills, as well as network with others. Sophie has recently been promoted to a Service Manager role in our Housing service.

# Spotlight: Empower



Amy joined us as our new fire safety manager in 2024, and has just started a level 4 Fire Safety two-year apprenticeship to help her develop further in this field and ensure we're on top of our game in terms of looking after our residents' safety. Amy says,

"Developing my skills means I am confident that I have the skills and knowledge to undertake my role effectively now, but also I feel empowered to lead my team effectively and be ahead of the curve with industry changes".



Julie, part of our homeless support team as an accommodation support worker, explains she feels supported by her colleagues and empowered in her role, which involves supporting our most complex and challenging tenants to maintain their tenancies, as well as encouraging them that their lives can change and that they can, at the end of their journey, secure permanent accommodation. Julie says,

"In our homelessness team, I work with a great bunch of people and we are all here at the end of the phone to listen to each other when needed. I have the opportunity to shape my role, supported by my managers when I have an idea and can see this through to implementation".



Stewart, our senior streetscene supervisor oversees a wide range of matters, from the operational leadership of the wide ranging seven-day streetscene service, to researching and project managing related building developments. Stewart is also an incident liaison officer in emergency planning and a mental health first aider.

Stewart feels empowered to use his extensive skills and knowledge as well strong stakeholder contacts built up over his career to confidently take on new and innovative projects that make a real difference to our community. Stewart says,

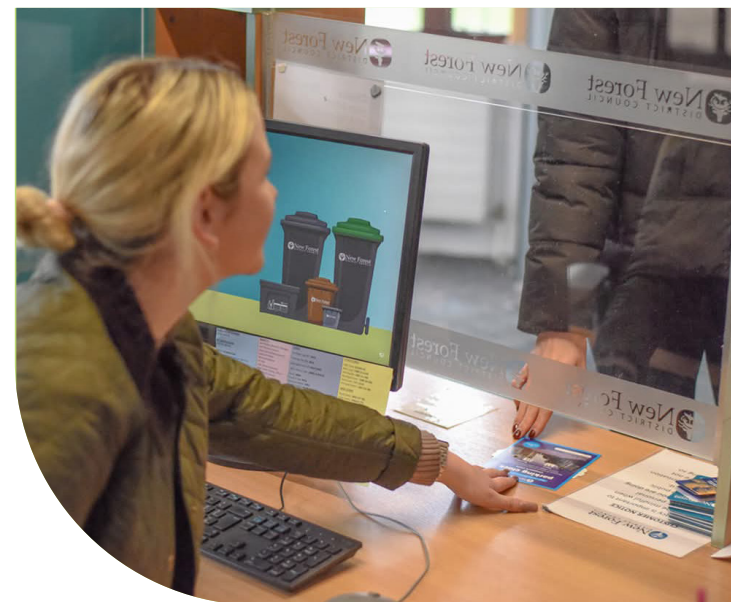
"As part of our building development activities I have worked with local charities to deliver 'changing places' (specialised toilet and changing facilities for people with severe disabilities) in key locations across the district. I feel proud that disabled individuals and their families now have access to the New Forest".

# How will we deliver this strategy

Our delivery plan is focused on creating the most impact possible over two years, establishing foundations in year one and building on these in year two to increase our capabilities.

We are committed to delivering a far-reaching action plan over the two year period under the themes of strong roots, grow, connect, and empower, aligned to our purpose of engaging and investing in our people and creating the conditions for change.

Our delivery plan includes development of new ideas and review and improvement of existing activities, all of which will be embedded into our day-to-day work to ensure the benefits are sustained long term. We are committed to learning and remaining flexible, meaning we can adapt our plan as needed in this changing environment.



# Our delivery plan

## Strong roots

Improve recruitment and other HR processes.

Create a behaviours framework aligned to our LEAF values.

Develop a toolkit of resources to support change management.

Identify different audiences across our teams to enable tailored communications, training, and other opportunities.

Identify and develop core skills across the organisation.

Create a leadership and management competency framework and establish learning opportunities to support high performance.

Review and amend key people policies.

Improve quality and usability of our workforce data.

## Grow

Review and clarify mandatory training requirements.

Enhance opportunities for career development including apprenticeships and other opportunities for new and existing staff.

Review and improve personal development processes.

## Connect

Review and improve internal communications and enhance employee engagement.

Enhance our staff intranet.

Create new and support existing peer networks.

## Empower

Implement a programme to develop 'digital skills for all'.

Create a learning hub.

Grow opportunities for coaching, mentoring, buddying and shadowing.

Develop targeted learning opportunities based on need of different staff audiences.



Cabinet – 2 April 2025

**Digital Strategy 2025-2028**

Purpose	For decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides the council's proposed digital strategy for 2025-2028.</p> <p>The current digital strategy expires in 2025 therefore it has been updated in line with the corporate suite of documents to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan, Transformation Strategy and Customer Strategy.</p>
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p><b>It is recommended that Cabinet:</b></p> <p><b>1. Recommend to council the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025-2028</b></p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>To support the delivery of the corporate plan, transformation strategy, customer strategy and people strategy.</p> <p>To support the strategic vision for digital at NFDC and best position it for local government reorganisation.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	<p>Rich Bird Data, Development and Delivery Manager <a href="mailto:Rich.Bird@nfdc.gov.uk">Rich.Bird@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>

	<p>Kim Gray ICT Operations Manager <a href="mailto:Kim.Gray@nfdc.gov.uk">Kim.Gray@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Sponsored by:</p> <p>Alan Bethune Strategic Director Corporate Resources &amp; Transformation Section 151 Officer <a href="mailto:alan.bethune@nfdc.gov.uk">alan.bethune@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Rebecca Drummond Assistant Director - Transformation <a href="mailto:Rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk">Rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>
--	--

## Introduction and background

1. The Digital Strategy 2025 – 2028 has been developed following the adoption of and in support of the Corporate Plan, Transformation Strategy and Customer Strategy. This inward facing strategy enables the implementation of these outwardly focused strategies by setting out focused digital principles and to leverage new modern technologies to support our residents, staff and members in our digital journey.
2. The proposed strategy will run from 2025-2028 with a mindful focus on activities and priorities in line with local government reorganisation (LGR).
3. The digital strategy enables the delivery of the six digital principles:

### **a. Principle 1 - Customer first, digital by design**

Customer needs will be at the heart of the digital services that we deliver using full end to end digital process models.

### **b. Principle 2 - Data driven**

All services will proactively use data to inform decision making and report performance.

### **c. Principle 3 – Digital transformation**

Digital Transformation will deliver modern digital technologies, automate manual processes and enhance our digital culture



#### **d. Principle 4 – Secure by design**

Digital services will be secure by design to protect the council's data, systems, people and residents.

#### **e. Principle 5 - Robust and resilient infrastructure**

The core foundations of our digital services will be robust and resilient to ensure we are working, and our services can be accessed, in the right place, at the right time and with the right device.

#### **f. Principle 6 – Digital skills for all**

Digital skills for all will support our staff and members through learning and development to safely benefit, effectively contribute to and access the councils' digital services.

4. Our digital strategy is mindful that the technology landscape can change quickly in today's modern digital world and to support local government reorganisation (LGR), so it will remain agile in its activities through regular strategic review points and the supportive guidance of the council's governance groups.
5. The proposed approach to digital is consistent with many other organisations, public and private. The development of the strategy considered the best practices currently being adopted across public and private sectors as well as needs and ideas unique to NFDC.

#### **Corporate plan priorities**

6. The digital strategy supports delivery of the Future New Forest programme.
7. The digital strategy aligns with the 'Customer and digital services' theme within our Transformation strategy.
8. The digital strategy links closely to our customer strategy with alignment throughout.
9. The digital strategy supports the 'empower' theme within our people strategy including a 'Digital skills for all' programme.

#### **Options appraisal**

10. The current digital strategy expires in 2025 and therefore required a refreshed strategy.

## **Consultation undertaken**

11. The digital strategy is a joint delivery by the ICT Leadership team sponsored by the Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer) and Assistant Director - Transformation.
12. Assessment against other public sector strategies was undertaken.
13. Internal consultation with our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) contributed to the strategy content.
14. Internal consultation with the Executive Management Team (EMT) contributed to the strategy content.
15. The strategy was considered and supported by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel in March 2025.

## **Financial and resource implications**

16. The annual ICT budget and Transformation business case will be funding the activities of this strategy. Transformation for example refers to the digital transformation projects and associated resources.
17. No additional resources are being requested at this time beyond what was included in the original transformation business case. A point in time review of skills and resource needs was completed in February 2025 with confidence in the approach and roles to be recruited. Future resource needs will be agile and proportionate.
18. All proposed resources are still required. Operational and Delivery activities continue to progress with resources being diverted to the highest priorities and a realistic and proportionate approach to timelines, quality and task completion.

## **Legal implications**

19. None arising directly from this report. Applicable digital strategy activities will be appropriately assessed and taken under advisement of the Council's Legal team.

## **Risk assessment**

20. Recruitment of the right skills and in a timely manner remain a challenge across the public sector.

21. The ICT service maintains and regularly reviews its service risk register to feed into the corporate principal risk register. Individual ICT projects maintain a risk log detailing specific tactical risks.
22. The technology landscape often changes at an accelerated pace and our strategy will remain agile to evolving internal and external factors such as LGR. We will prioritise, be open to opportunities and strategically review our direction to realign if needed within the guidance of our governance processes.
23. We will need to prioritise delivery of new digital solutions, whether planned or unplanned. The ICT work programme highlights regular strategic review points to align on strategic priorities and the service follows a demand management process.

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

24. Recycling of old ICT equipment is embedded within ICT Operational processes.
25. Digitising processes and reducing manual paper prints contribute to a positive climate and environment.
26. Adoption of cloud-based systems reduces the on premise footprint and usage of power and air conditioning as examples.
27. Through the provision of online self-service options, we facilitate reduced travel to our offices and therefore reduced emissions from vehicles.

### **Equalities implications**

28. The digital strategy includes the 'digital skills for all' programme in partnership with the transformation strategy to promote a workplace where the digital training needs of all our staff and members are inclusive and considered.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

29. None arising directly from this report.

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

30. None arising directly from this report. Changes impacting the collection and use of personal data will be appropriately assessed and taken under advisement of the Council's Information Governance team.

## **New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

31. None identified

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy 2025-2028 v0.5

### **Background Papers:**

None

# Digital Strategy

2025-2028

ICT Services

Document publish date: 11/03/2025

Version number: 0.5

Version	Author	Date	Changes made
0.1	Data Development Delivery Manager ICT Operations Manager	23/10/24	Initial draft. Informal feedback.
0.2	Data Development Delivery Manager ICT Operations Manager	05/11/24	Senior Leadership Team (SLT) feedback.
0.3	Data Development Delivery Manager ICT Operations Manager	20/11/24	Consultation with SLT and ICT management team
0.4	Data Development Delivery Manager ICT Operations Manager	02/12/24	Incorporated feedback from SLT, Executive Management Team (EMT), Resources and Transformation Panel.
0.5	Data Development Delivery Manager ICT Operations Manager	11/03/25	Internal consultation. Approved by EMT.

Contents

Introduction..... 3

Where are we now ..... 4

Strategic Planning and Alignment..... 5

Digital Vision and Principles..... 6

    Principle 1 - Customer first, digital by design ..... 7

    Principle 2 - Data driven ..... 8

    Principle 3 - Digital transformation ..... 9

    Principle 4 – Secure by design ..... 10

    Principle 5 – Robust and resilient infrastructure ..... 11

    Principle 6 – Digital skills for all..... 12

Digital Pillars..... 13

# Introduction

New Forest District Council (NFDC) has a Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2028 to meet our customer needs, protect finances and embed sustainability.

Our Digital Strategy covering 2025 to 2028 is an internal document intended to guide the organisation through digital decision making and best practice with commitments and actions that support delivery of the more outward facing customer and transformation strategies.

Our strategy will be delivered with 6 digital principles at its core:

- 1. Customer first, digital by design**
- 2. Data driven**
- 3. Digital transformation**
- 4. Secure by design**
- 5. Robust and resilient infrastructure**
- 6. Digital skills for all**

Previous digital strategies have delivered the foundations of our technology stack today including the use of a leading cloud server platform, reliable end user devices with remote access and the beginnings of cloud-based solutions supporting digital business processes.

Our updated strategy places our customers at the centre of the digital experience, and we are ambitious to embrace further the modern technologies of the future to offer a more immediate, personalised and convenient customer experience.

Customers who are unable to navigate our digital solutions will still be able to contact us in a range of different ways, according to their needs, including by phone and face to face.

Our strategy sets out plans to digitally transform, make better use of data and grow our digital skills together through a collaborative approach with staff, members, partners and other public sector organisations.

We will be realistic with our journey and visionary in our ambitions to meet the needs of a digital council.

## Where are we now

The ICT service catalogue today has circa 200 digital services supporting the delivery of council services and providing digital tools to our staff.

The council's digital landscape is one where investment has allowed flexible working from any location through a resilient and accessible server infrastructure, staff have access to a variety of devices to best suit their needs and our software portfolio has seen a reduction in legacy applications with greater use of modern cloud platforms.

We continue to make use of platforms such as Microsoft 365 to support day to day working and reduce manual effort through automation. We are mindful there is more to do in this area alongside the introduction of new back-office systems.

Our ICT Service team skillset has and continues to grow in all areas as we work to keep pace with an ever-changing digital world. This is equally true for our staff and members, where the adoption of digital systems has accelerated, and we must be mindful of this change impact and the need for further support to maximise the use of technology.

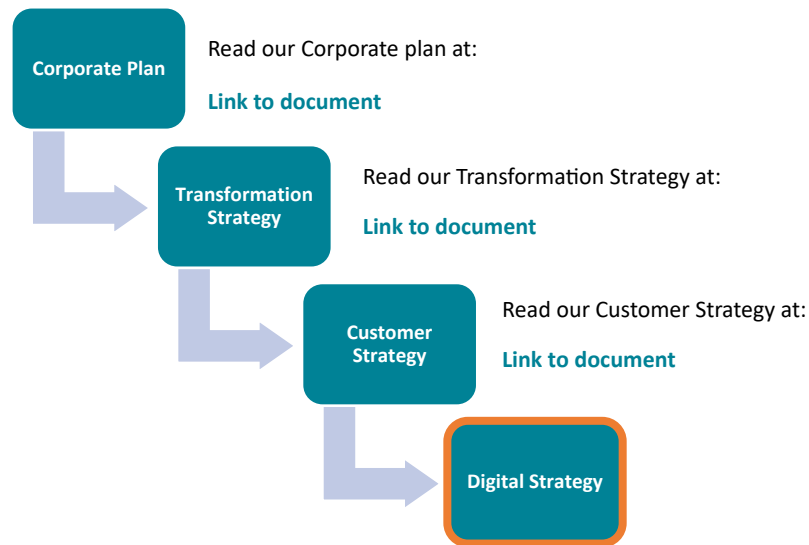
We have supportive ICT processes in place for, but not limited to, demand management, technical assurance, change management, project delivery, service delivery and cyber security which continues to be an ever-growing threat with increased and more sophisticated attacks on local government organisations a reality rather than a possibility.

We continue to balance our resources and plan appropriately to support and deliver growth in our digital maturity across the organisation.

With our new strategy in place, we are well placed to embark on a journey of digital transformation whilst fortifying the foundations put in place by previous strategies.



# Strategic Planning and Alignment



Our digital strategy aligns with our overarching corporate plan and fits with the 'Customer and digital services' theme within our Transformation strategy.

Our digital strategy links closely to our customer strategy by supporting the growing demand from our customers for access to digital services by:

- Focusing on customer needs and outcomes when redesigning services.
- Supporting customers to self-help through online services.
- Updating systems and processes to keep pace with advancing digital technologies.
- Improving customer experience by integrating data and systems.
- Making it easier for customers to find services and connect at their convenience.

Our digital strategy supports the 'empower' theme within our people strategy including a 'Digital skills for all' programme that aims to support digital learning and development for all staff and members.

Collaboration and enablement are part of our digital strategy to support the delivery of departmental service plans so all our services can realise the benefits that modern technology can bring.

# Digital Vision and Principles

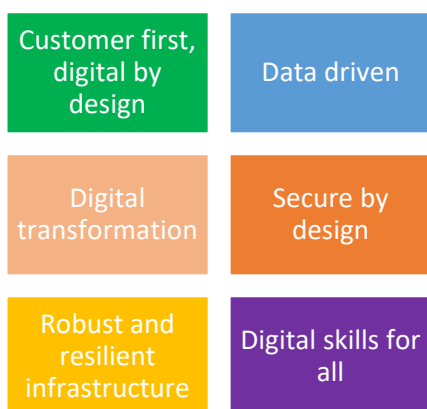
Our 6 digital principles are the foundation of our digital strategy, all contributing to the overall digital vision to be a digital council that embraces the opportunities of technology and modern digital service design to empower our staff with best-in-class digital tools to efficiently deliver an effective 'customer first' experience for its residents.

Our principles will drive how digital technology is adopted and used across the council with clear alignment to our corporate plan and transformation strategy.

## *Our Digital Vision:*

**"to be a digital council that embraces the opportunities of technology and modern digital service design to empower our staff with best in class digital tools to efficiently deliver an effective 'customer first' experience for its residents"**

## The 6 Digital Principles



## Principle 1 - Customer first, digital by design



### **Customer needs will be at the heart of the digital services that we design and deliver.**

Our digital services will be inclusive to the needs of all our customers including residents, staff, members, partners and local businesses.

Through a 'customer first, digital by design' approach the council can offer services that are accessible twenty-four hours a day, allowing our customers to apply for, pay for, view and report at times that are convenient to them.

By working in partnership with service areas, ICT can be an enabler of digital across the council, helping individual teams realise their digital benefits.

### **We will:**

- design services to improve customer experiences, make better use of technology and reduce manual effort through automation
- enable customers to interact and access services digitally at a time that suits them
- implement a customer relationship management system that keeps customers informed on progress and instils confidence in service delivery
- increase the number of services available online

- ensure customers will still be able to contact us in a range of different ways alongside digital, according to their needs, including by phone and face to face.
- be a strategic enabler for services across the council to enable them to realise their digital goals through collaborative and two-way partnership working
- build a 'Customer First, Digital by Design' mindset and shared understanding in the council.



### **How will this be measured:**

- Resident satisfaction with Council services
- effectiveness of collaboration between ICT and service areas identified through regular feedback and senior leadership participation
- reduction in use of paper to digital methods for high transactions
- increase in online payment options for high transactions
- increase online service and self-service options for high customer contact and key transactions

***"Customer needs will be at the heart of the digital services that we deliver using full end to end digital process models."***

## Principle 2 - Data driven



### **All services will proactively use data to inform decision making and report performance.**

The council securely stores various datasets to support the services it delivers. Typically, data is based on a person, a place or a thing.

Through a council wide Data Framework that incorporates the best practice of Master Data Management (MDM), data can be extracted, transformed, stored and made available to those who need it and are permitted to access it.

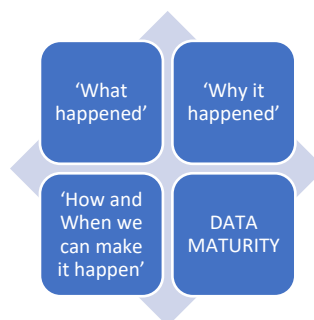
We will hold a central and accurate record relating to each of our customers and assets which can be relied on for informed decision making.

With accurate data, council staff will be able to see a '360 view' of our customers and assets providing an integrated and consolidated view of data from multiple systems.

The introduction of a Digital Data Platform will provide the technical foundations for storing data held by the council. The platform will store the council's data securely, will provide access to those who need it and facilitate visually rich reports and dashboards for analysis and business intelligence.

As the council's data maturity position evolves, it will describe 'What

happened', diagnose 'Why it happened' and in time predict 'How and When we can make it happen'.



### **We will:**

- deliver a Data Framework to be adopted across the council that outlines our approach to data including policies, processes and systems
- deliver a Digital Data Platform based on modern technology for the secure storage of council data and to act as a data warehouse
- make use of digital tools such as Power BI to visualise, analyse and report on data
- develop the skills of our staff to use data in the most effective way

### **How will this be measured:**

- adoption of a council wide Data Framework
- real world examples of where data analysis has helped inform and improve service delivery
- the number of datasets available online

***"The Data Framework and Digital Data Platform will ensure our data is Manageable, Accurate, Searchable and Compliant"***

## Principle 3 - Digital transformation



**Digital Transformation will introduce positive change through the design of modern and innovative digital services.**

Digital Transformation (DT) will create new or modify existing business processes, culture, and deliver exceptional customer experiences.

The ICT work programme will deliver digital change through various projects that support our wider Transformation programme and put our customers at the forefront of service design.

Supportive governance and best practice project delivery including detailed planning, risk management, financial management and resource planning will look to mitigate risks of not delivering on time and on budget.

Our technical enterprise architecture will bring together different technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation to standardise and apply common design patterns to increase efficiency and release capacity across the council.

***“Digital Transformation will deliver modern digital technologies, automate manual processes and enhance our digital culture”***

### We will:

- standardise and apply common design patterns and platforms across the council to release capacity and deliver efficiency benefits
- maximise the use of new technology and keep our software up to date
- maximise the use of M365 technology
- explore the safe, compliant and ethical use of AI
- explore the use of low code platforms and the benefits of developing in house solutions alongside ‘off the shelf’ products
- build services that are device agnostic, working on all laptop and mobile devices
- enable digital goals to be met through service led design whilst maximising the benefits and expertise of the central ICT team
- benchmark against industry best practice and other local government organisations

### How will this be measured:

- percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered on time and on budget
- benefit realisation from ICT investment
- resident satisfaction score with the quality of NFDC digital services
- staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services

## Principle 4 – Secure by design



**Digital services will be secure by design to protect the council's data, systems, people and residents.**

All digital services that we offer will be secure by design. This prioritises security from the outset of product design and throughout its lifecycle.

The council will need to take a holistic approach to cyber security prioritising it as a core business requirement rather than a technical feature.

The management of cyber security risk is an organisational wide responsibility, not limited to the ICT service. ICT will provide expert technical advice for the organisation to mitigate or accept.

Security for projects within the ICT work programme will be technically assured throughout its lifecycle and sustained through its transition into live service.

There are obligations that the council must meet in relation to cyber security and information security as well as standards that the council will commit to maintaining. These obligations and standards should be met with a minimal impact on delivering good quality services.

### We will:

- design services in line with security best practice ensuring that the council maintains compliance to Public Services Network Code of Connection and DWP Memorandum of Understanding
- affirm the council meets industry standards for security through recognised accreditations like Cyber Essentials
- follow the corporate approach to risk management and align with its appetite to risk
- ensure the council has a robust and fit for purpose cyber security policy and staff awareness plan
- undertake a proactive approach to cyber security event prevention and response management

### How will this be measured:

- minimised impact from security incidents
- accreditations and compliance gained year on year
- less vulnerabilities being captured within the internal and external scans
- 100% of staff undertaking the mandatory security and information governance policy training

**“The council will need to take a holistic approach to cybersecurity prioritising it as a core business requirement”**

## Principle 5 – Robust and resilient infrastructure



### **Digital services will be underpinned by robust and resilient infrastructure.**

Delivery of all services is increasingly reliant on ICT systems and connectivity therefore it is essential that the underpinning infrastructure is robust and resilient but also flexible and agile to meet changing business requirements, technology advancements and the ever-changing landscape of cyber security threats.

The technical (servers, networks, end-user devices) and non-technical (operating model, policies, licencing, training, roles & responsibilities) infrastructure must become flexible and responsive to meet the accelerating pace of technology changes being embraced by the council.

The council already makes use of Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS) via the Microsoft Azure stack, reducing our on-premise server footprint and maximising the benefits of a globally recognised platform.

Service areas will maintain their own business continuity plans to invoke in the event of a disaster affecting digital services.

### **We will:**

- provide secure, robust and reliable systems and support that underpin service delivery
- ensure there are robust ICT disaster recovery and ICT business continuity plans in place for ICT systems
- ensure staff and members have the right end user device for their role
- be a 'cloud first' council, making use of Software as a Service (SaaS), Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS) platforms where appropriate

### **How will this be measured:**

- the percentage of unscheduled downtime for critical systems will be less than 5%
- regular testing of the disaster recovery plan to ensure its fit for purpose
- reduction in hardware-based incident tickets

***"The core foundations of our digital services will be robust and resilient to ensure we are working in the right place, at the right time and with the right device."***



## Principle 6 – Digital skills for all



**Staff will be supported through learning and development in digital skills to safely benefit from and contribute to the councils digital services.**

Through our 'Customer First, Digital by Design' principle, we will be introducing new digital technology for staff, members and residents to make use of.

We know that our residents want to transact digitally with us and have access to services at a time that is convenient to them so the need to keep pace with the ever-changing technology landscape is important to maximise the use of technology and ensure we are realising the benefits that digital business processes can bring.

Cyber threats continue to evolve in the digital age so equipping our staff with the right skills to use technology safely and ensure our data is secure is fundamental.

We must be mindful that our staff have varying levels of digital skills so investment in skills development, training and career progression opportunities will help ensure an appropriately skilled, resilient and positive wellbeing workforce.

### We will:

- ensure ICT staff have learning and development objectives that align to the current and future technology landscape
- explore Digital Skills training for all council staff and members
- embed training for staff as part of digital projects to ensure appropriate skill levels at the point of service transition

***"Digital Skills for All will be inclusive and mindful of the specific digital learning needs of all staff"***

***"Digital Skills for All will support our staff through learning and development to safely benefit, effectively contribute to and access the councils' digital services"***

### How will this be measured:

- digital skills maturity assessment of staff before and after the 'Digital Skills for All' programme
- increased efficiency in services through the more efficient use of technology demonstrated by real work examples
- Staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services

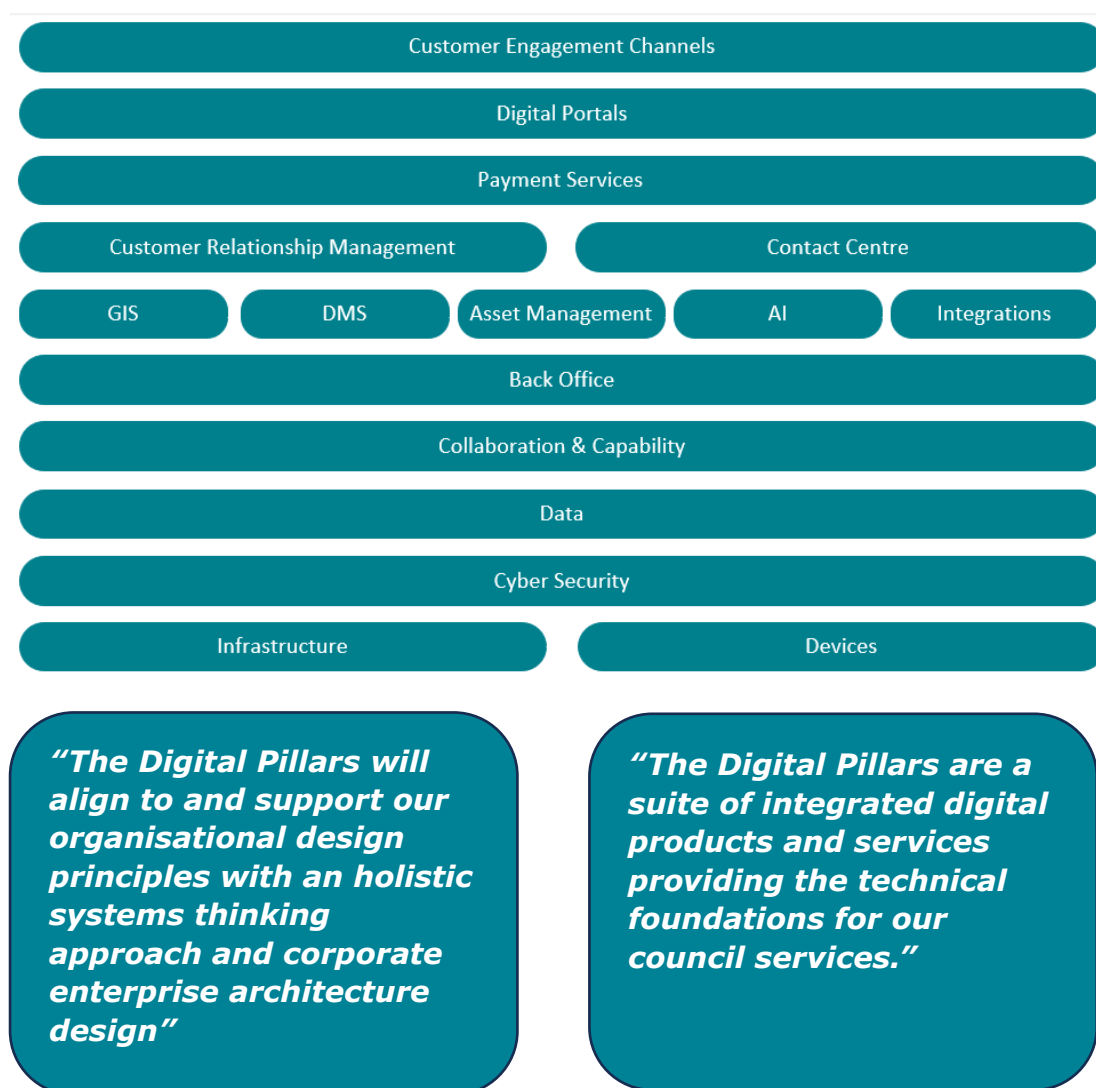


# Digital Pillars

The development of customer first, digital by design services will be facilitated through the provision, operation and enhancement of our digital pillars.

These digital pillars will comprise of many technologies and systems brought together in a consistent and integrated suite of products and services.

The digital pillars will facilitate our enterprise architecture, where our approach is to reuse and maximise value of technology across all council services, providing a consistent customer experience with simplified and automated processes.



This page is intentionally left blank

## Cabinet – 2 April 2025

**Corporate peer challenge report and action plan**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The report presents the Local Government Associations (LGA) feedback report from the December 2024 Corporate Peer Challenge and associated action plan.</p> <p>In consideration of capacity to deliver on the council's ambitions and respond effectively to the Devolution White Paper, as recommended by the peer team, the report also presents a revised list of key deliverables in support of corporate priorities.</p> <p>The report also presents a motion referred to the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel, regarding the Council's process for selecting Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels, given that the Corporate Peer Challenge report makes specific commentary on the appointment of Overview and Scrutiny Panel chairs.</p>
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p><b>Cabinet is asked to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Note the LGA's feedback report;</b></li> <li><b>2. Approve the action plan at Appendix 2 in response to the recommendations and observations contained within the feedback report;</b></li> <li><b>3. Approve the revised key deliverables at Appendix 3; and</b></li> <li><b>4. Consider the views of the Resources and Transformation O&amp;S Panel, with regard to the motion set out at paragraph 18 on the process for</b></li> </ol>

	<b>selecting Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of Committees and Panels, and make recommendations to Council.</b>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>Recommendations support the continuous improvement focus of the corporate peer challenge, including the council's key strategic priorities within the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The Corporate Peer Challenge process requires the council to publish the findings on the review and an associated action plan.</p>
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader of the Council
Strategic Director(s)	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive
Officer Contact	<p>Rebecca Drummond  Assistant Director – Transformation  023 8028 5080  rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

## Introduction and background

1. In December 2024 NFDC invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a corporate peer challenge (CPC). This process aims to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge to our activity designed to support our decisions, ambitions and appraise our current performance and improvement capabilities.
2. Over three days a team of five peers and two representatives from the LGA visited the council and gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 40 meetings and spoke to more than 130 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
3. The team was made up of both political and managerial peers from different authorities across the country.
4. Initial feedback was presented in person at the end of the onsite visit and is now further supported by the LGA feedback report (Appendix 1), detailing recommendations and observations based on their findings during the challenge.

5. The outcome of the peer challenge is extremely positive and worth celebrating in its own right. The peer team made some observations and recommendations to support our continued improvement, dealt with later in this report, but commended the council on its clear vision, how much it has already achieved, the visibility of the Leader and the Chief Executive, the passion and commitment of Members and its staff being the greatest asset. They thanked all staff for their openness and honesty throughout the process.
6. The peer team reflected that it was great to see the organisation on an improvement journey with some of the comments they received during the review including that the council has a heart and cares, has been proactive and shown great leadership, that it delivers for residents and staff saying that they are proud to say they work for New Forest District Council.
7. It is a requirement of the process that the Feedback report is published three months after the visit (by 12 March 2025), followed by an action plan five months after the visit (by 12 May 2025).

### **Recommendations and action plan**

8. The peer team's key recommendations to the council are:
  - Clarify priorities and timelines for delivery
  - Create an overarching corporate narrative and communicate proactively with staff, members and local people
  - Design and deliver a robust member and senior officer development programme
  - Consider ways to strengthen the Overview and Scrutiny function
  - Ensure there is effective ownership of the transformation programme by the Executive Management Team
  - Apply internal policies and practices consistently across the Council
  - Develop an assets strategy and action plan
  - Demonstrate further commitment to carbon reduction with a clear action plan
  - Continue the good practice in housing and consider applying successful approaches to the wider organisation
  - Remember to celebrate your achievements no matter how small or big they are
9. The next stage of the peer challenge process commits us to publishing an action plan, outlining our intentions, activity and timelines towards addressing the recommendations within the LGA feedback report.

10. The report also makes a number of observations and suggestions and these have also been considered as opportunities for improvement in the action plan at Appendix 2.
11. The feedback report refers to the fact the Devolution White Paper was published after the CPC visit and its initial findings. It is appropriate that the action plan and consideration of priorities is now framed in this new context.
12. Progress against the action plan will be monitored and formally reported on six months from publication (October 2025).

### **Key deliverables**

13. One of the key recommendations of the peer team is for the council to consider the capacity it needs to deliver on the corporate plan priorities over the short, medium and longer terms, accepting that not all of them can be delivered at the same time.
14. The corporate plan continues to set the strategic direction of the organisation but it's appropriate to consider the legacy priorities and start to refine what we must deliver against these priorities and where capacity would be better redirected considering the new and emerging context.
15. Consideration has been given to key deliverables, as linked to the corporate plan priorities, in response to the recommendation and to reflect the new local government reorganisation context and its demands. Appendix 3 sets out an initial view of the key deliverables although it is acknowledged that these will need to be flexible and kept under review as future demands arise.
16. It is proposed that the delivery plan is subject to regular review by EMT and formally reviewed annually as part of the annual performance report.

### **Follow up review**

17. As part of the CPC, the council is required to have a progress review and publish findings of this within twelve months of the original CPC visit (by 12 December 2025). The follow up visit is anticipated to take place during October 2025 and will coincide with the update on the action plan progress.

### **Motion referred by Council**

18. At the Full Council meeting of 24 February 2025, Cllr Rackham moved the following motion, which was seconded by Cllr J Davies:-

*"This Council resolves that:-*

- 1. Only those Members who do not belong to the ruling political group shall be eligible for nomination to the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the ordinary committees and panels of the Council; and*
  - 2. The consequential amendment to the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings be made by the Monitoring Officer."*
19. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings, the Full Council resolved to refer the motion to the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and specifically through the consideration of this report, given the Corporate Peer Challenge report commentary relating to the appointment of opposition Members as Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Panels.
  20. As this is ultimately a matter for the Council to determine, the Panel was asked to consider the motion as set out above, and make onward recommendations to Cabinet, and Council.
  21. At the Panel meeting, Members passed a resolution that the Council should not depart from its current procedures, whereby the selection of committee and panel chairs is undertaken at the Annual Council meeting by the voting Members of each committee or panel in question. It should be noted that where positions are contested, the Council's Constitution provides for a secret ballot to be undertaken. Cabinet is asked to consider the Panel's views, including the further commentary expressed at paragraph 24 below, and make a final recommendation to Council.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

22. A core component of the CPC review is to assess the clarity of the council's priorities, how well informed they are by the local context and whether the council is delivering effectively on these priorities contained within the Corporate Plan.

### **Options appraisal**

23. The council is required by the LGA to publish the findings of the CPC and an associated action plan. The council welcomed the review and is keen to act upon the observations made to ensure continuous improvement.

## **Consultation undertaken**

24. The Panel considered and noted the Corporate Peer Challenge report and supported the action plan. The Panel resolved to recommend to the Cabinet that the motion regarding the process for selecting Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of committees and panels should remain unchanged. In respect of Appendix 3 and the list of delivery activities, a member highlighted the need to continue to make representations regarding the upgrading of the A326. Members highlighted the difficulties faced by town and parish councils in keeping abreast of developments regarding LGR and it was noted that a meeting involving NFALC was scheduled for 28 April, to which all parish and town councils were invited.
25. Internal consultation has been undertaken with the Executive Management Team and relevant members of the Senior Leadership Team to inform the action plan.
26. Key deliverables have been informed by the Senior Leadership Team, Executive Management Team and Cabinet members.
27. The feedback report has been shared with our stakeholders and partners that contributed to the peer challenge with their valuable insight.

## **Financial and resource implications**

28. Actions identified are within existing resources. Key deliverables have been flagged as to whether resources are already identified and where not they will be resourced from diverting resources from activities that have been de-prioritised.

## **Legal implications**

29. There are none arising directly from this report and the reprioritising of planned activities has had due regard to statutory requirements.

## **Risk assessment**

30. A formal risk assessment is deemed not to be required. The CPC visit and subsequent recommendations was immediately prior to the publication of the Devolution White Paper and the emerging impact of local government reorganisation will be taken into account within the actions identified.

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



31. The action plan directly responds to the CPC recommendation for the council to demonstrate further commitment to carbon reduction with a clear action plan.

### **Equalities implications**

32. The CPC feedback report makes a few observations on how equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) can be improved, acknowledging that the council has already driven forward efforts in this regard. These observations have been included in the action plan to further enhance our commitments in this area.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

33. There are none arising directly from this report.

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

34. The CPC feedback report makes an observation on how the consistent use of technology can be improved. This observation has been included in the action plan.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer  
Challenge New Forest District  
Council (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 2024)  
Feedback Report  
Appendix 2 – CPC Action Plan  
Appendix 3 – Corporate Priorities –  
key deliverables review

### **Background Papers:**

# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

New Forest District Council

10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Feedback report



**Corporate Peer Challenge**



## Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Executive summary .....	4
3. Recommendations .....	6
4. Summary of peer challenge approach .....	8
5. Feedback .....	10
6. Next steps .....	24

# 1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending three days at New Forest District Council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of Sector-led Improvement (SLI) put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: Responsible for their own performance, Accountable locally not nationally and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team and the recommendations that the council are required to action.

# 2. Executive summary

New Forest District Council (the Council) is a well-performing council that clearly understands its unique local context which consists of the New Forest National Park, urban areas and 40 miles of coastline. The peer team enjoyed spending time in the New Forest.

There is widespread acceptance that changes in leadership of the Council since the last CPC in 2017, with both a new Leader and new chief executive, has been instrumental in creating a culture of change and improvement. Both the Leader and the chief executive were consistently described by officers, members and external stakeholders as highly visible, collaborative and engaging. Under their leadership the Council has embraced partnership working, become more outward facing, and maximised its role as an effective convener. As a result, the Council now plays a

## 4

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

more credible role on the local and regional stage, both at the political and officer levels.

The Council is now more prominent in maximising exciting regeneration opportunities, such as the delivery of Solent Freeport and town centre regeneration. It works effectively in partnership with businesses, community groups, culture and health partners on a range of areas, as well as continuing to work closely with the New Forest National Park Authority.

Members and officer working relationships are effective, supportive and characterised by mutual respect. Whilst senior members are clearly passionate and committed, there are opportunities for them to have a greater role in setting the direction of the Council. The peer team also heard about the appetite to strengthen the Overview and Scrutiny function and providing more training and support to members on this topic.

The corporate plan clearly sets out an ambitious vision for New Forest, but the peer team consistently heard from staff, members and external partners that there were too many priorities, with a lack of clarity over what would be delivered and by when. Clearer delivery plans for the priorities would improve this. There are also opportunities to make the delivery of the priorities more visible, with the potential to make better use of external and internal communication channels.

The transformation programme, Future New Forest, is in place and has strong commitment from all political groups and staff at all levels. Leadership of the programme is effective, with robust commitment from the Executive Management Team and Senior Leadership Group to deliver it. To further enhance the likelihood of its success, the peer team encourages all members of the Executive Management Team to collectively own the programme, and for its scope to remain focused.

Meeting housing needs is one of the Council's key priorities and the peer team was asked to consider it as an additional area of focus. The Council's development and acquisition programme is centred on local needs; it has strong political support and with effective working relationships between the portfolio holder and the Housing department, the Council is well placed to achieve its ambitions. Nevertheless, challenges remain, and the Council will need to maximise partnership working, particularly emerging relationships with tenants, developers and private sector landlords, as well as with charities to tackle homelessness.

## 5

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number

03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

Overall, the organisation has strong foundations to deliver on its corporate plan ambitions. Delivery will ultimately rest on the capacity and capability of staff, who are New Forest District Council's strongest asset. The workforce is passionate, enthusiastic and proud to work at New Forest District Council. Crucially, staff are committed to delivering the transformation programme. However, the peer team heard that working practices, policies and the new values were being inconsistently applied across the organisation and that this could undermine staff morale. To sustain this, recognising the issue of capacity and maintaining staff motivation will be important.

The Council is in a solid financial position, because of a prudent approach over many years. Sound governance and audit processes supplement its culture of effective financial management and planning. Reserves have been maintained and officers and members have identified future financial pressures facing the Council. The Council has started to undertake work to be more commercially minded, for example developing proposals to release some of Appletree Court to generate income and pulling together an assets register. As the Council faces increasing financial pressures, further work in this area may strengthen its ability to be financially sustainable.

The Council should be rightly proud of what it has achieved to date, with many improvements taking place behind the scenes. Whilst the Council acknowledges that it remains on a journey with some way to go to further improve, the peer team encourages the Council to celebrate its achievements much more, no matter how big or small they are.

Following the corporate peer challenge, the [Devolution White Paper](#) announced the Government's desire for all of England to benefit from devolution. The White Paper also announced that the Government will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for all two tier areas. In light of this, the Council will now need to take stock of its priorities and refocus its plans.

### 3. Recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

### **3.1 Clarify priorities and timelines for delivery**

The corporate plan sets out lots of ambitious priorities and not all of them can be delivered at the same time. The Council will need to consider capacity in order to understand what can be delivered over the short, medium and longer terms, particularly in response to the publication of the Devolution White Paper.

### **3.2 Create an overarching corporate narrative and communicate proactively with staff, members and local people**

Only 66 per cent of respondents to the resident's survey said that they feel the Council keeps residents well-informed about the services it provides. A compelling narrative will help staff, members, partners, and residents look towards the future and help them see how they can support the delivery of the corporate plan.

### **3.3 Design and deliver a robust member and senior officer development programme**

Leadership of the Council, both at political and officer levels, is effective. Development days could further strengthen working relationships, particularly in supporting senior members to be more assertive in setting and steering the priorities of the Council.

### **3.4 Consider ways to strengthen your Overview and Scrutiny function**

Members are keen to provide more effective scrutiny and the Council may wish to consider ways to strengthen and develop its Overview and Scrutiny function; one option could be to appoint opposition members as chairs of the Panels.

### **3.5 Ensure there is collective ownership of the transformation programme by the Executive Management Team**

Collective ownership will ensure that all members of the Executive Management Team are all equally responsible for the delivery of the transformation programme, thereby contributing to the likelihood of its success.

### **3.6 Apply internal policies and practices consistently across the Council**

To maintain staff morale and commitment to the transformation programme, internal policies and practices must be applied consistently across the Council.



### **3.7 Develop an Assets Strategy and Action Plan**

The Council has already begun to understand its physical assets, their liabilities, and future commercial opportunities. The peer team encourages the Council to complete this work and develop a strategy to deal with the assets as part of a coherent corporate asset management appraisal system.

### **3.8 Demonstrate further commitment to carbon reduction with a clear action plan**

The Council has bold ambitions to reduce carbon emissions of council owned homes to net zero by 2050 and to reduce carbon emissions of the housing operational services; the peer team encourages the Council to develop an action plan that will demonstrate how it will deliver these ambitions.

### **3.9 Continue the good practice in housing and consider applying successful approaches to the wider organisation**

There are already examples of transformation and improvement achieved in the Council's Housing department. This presents a valuable opportunity to take the learning, for example the preparation for regulatory inspection, and apply it to other parts of the organisation.

### **3.10 Remember to celebrate your achievements no matter how small or big they are**

The Council has achieved significant change and improvement over the last few years, and there is much to be proud of. Whilst there is more work to be done, do not forget to celebrate your achievements.

## **4. Summary of peer challenge approach**

### **4.1 The peer team**

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected by the LGA on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive, Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council

- Cllr William Nunn, Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council
- Cllr Sarah Osborne, East Sussex County Council
- Claire Astbury, Head of Housing Strategy and Development, Luton Borough Council
- Jane Wilson, Chief Operating Officer, Cambridge City Council
- Eva Barnsley, LGA Policy Adviser
- Nick Searle, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

## 4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every Corporate Peer Challenge includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.

In addition to these themes, the Council asked the peer team to provide feedback on housing and its transformation programme.

### 4.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's time on site. This provided a clear steer to the peer team on the local context at New Forest District Council and what the peer team should focus on. It also included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent three days onsite at New Forest District Council, during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 130 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

## 5. Feedback

### 5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

In 2024, the Council launched its new [Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028](#), setting out clear ambitions for the district, with strategic priorities focusing on People, Place and Prosperity. The peer team consistently heard that the development of the corporate

10

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

plan involved comprehensive and meaningful engagement from staff, members and external partners.

The Council has made good progress on a number of its key priorities, including delivery of new affordable homes and implementation of its Waste Strategy 2022 – 2027. Whilst recognising that the Council has an ambitious de-carbonisation approach, aiming to reduce carbon emissions of council owned homes to net zero by 2050 and to reduce carbon emissions of the housing operational services, the peer team encourages the Council to develop an action plan with milestone targets demonstrating how it will deliver these ambitions.

Communication of the Council's priorities to staff, members and stakeholders is key to ensure that they understand their role in supporting its objectives. It is also important to be clear to residents about what the Council can and cannot deliver, and by when. Furthermore, the Council may wish to explore ways to make the delivery of its priorities more visible, such as through internal and external communication channels. A clearer narrative on priorities will better help staff, local people and partners understand what the priorities, why they are needed and when they will be delivered.

Although the corporate plan sets out ambitions, it was clear to the peer team that not all staff understood their role in delivering it, as well as feedback that there was a large number of priorities. The Council may therefore wish to explore ways to provide clarity on the priorities, outlining when priorities will be achieved over the short, medium and longer term, as well as ensuring there is a 'Golden Thread' from the corporate plan down to staff.

The corporate plan provided an opportunity for the Council to review its existing approach to performance management. It subsequently put in place arrangements to monitor performance against the strategic priorities outlined in the corporate plan. The Council's new performance management framework takes the commitments outlined in the corporate plan, works with the transformation programme, and builds continuous improvement opportunities and learning throughout. The corporate plan includes a list of 48 key performance indicators (KPIs). The development of corporate KPIs has been rigorous with detailed descriptions and data collection methodology assigned to each measure within a comprehensive definitions handbook. Performance against these KPIs is monitored and will be published via a corporate

performance dashboard.

The peer team saw visible evidence of the Council engaging with its residents, demonstrating that it continues to incorporate community engagement into service development and service provision. For example, the Tenant Involvement Group meets regularly and is used as a forum to engage and discuss ideas for future service delivery initiatives, with tenants reporting that they felt more listened to and respected. Community forums have been established covering cost of living, emergency planning and resilience. These forums invite town and parish councils, councillors, partners, emergency planning responders, local organisations, and representatives of the council to hear presentations from key speakers. These approaches demonstrate how the Council can continue to achieve community-driven solutions.

The peer team observed that community groups feel valued, with the annual community grants process seeing 17 awards totalling £135,000 in revenue support and £96,040 in 12 capital awards for 2024/25. The peer team welcomed that the grants in 2025/2026 will be closely aligned to the corporate plan objectives.

The Council has driven forward efforts to improve the equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI). This includes establishing the EDI staff group in July 2023, the launch of the launch of the LGBT+ employee-led network in June 2024, and the chief executive's discussions with different faith groups within the Council's workforce. The peer team commends the efforts to date and encourages the Council to build on this progress. The Council may wish to ask itself whether EDI features adequately in terms of service planning and delivery; whether there is appetite from other protected groups to establish staff networks; and whether EDI is being considered early enough in the policy development cycle so changes can be made.

### **5.1.1 Performance**

The Council's approach to business planning and performance management is relatively new, with a recently approved performance framework. The corporate plan includes a list of 48 key performance indicators (KPIs). Performance against these KPIs is monitored and is published via a corporate performance dashboard. As of August 2024, the 48 KPIs on or above target has been raised to 84%.

The Council uses a resident's survey to capture a range of data. The most recent

[resident's survey](#) (September – November 2022) engaged 760 residents across the district. The results are used to inform decision-making and the development of priorities. The survey showed positive results, for example 93% of respondents feel satisfied with the area as a place to live, and 78% of respondents feel satisfied with the way the Council runs things.

The Council's [LG Inform Headline Report](#) compares council performance to its Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) nearest neighbours. These show how the Council performs strongly in some areas, for example housing. When compared to other councils in the CIPFA nearest neighbours group the Council has the shortest amount of time taken to process housing benefit new claims at four days (average is 10 days), and below average number of total households on the housing waiting list at 1,876 (against an average of 2,687). It does, however, have the most number of households living in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households at 4.08 (average is 1.25) The peer team found that in housing, the Council showed a willingness to review their processes and improve performance monitoring.

The number of affordable homes delivered (130) in 2023/24 is below the benchmarking group average of 228. Despite spending the least amount in the benchmarking group of total revenue on planning and development services per head of population at £27.13 (against an average of £54.60), the Council performs well with 100 per cent of major planning applications decided on time and 95 per cent of other planning applications decided on time. Minor applications are at 86 per cent, which is just below the average of 92 per cent. In relation to this, the peer team found that local developers did report that they would like to see improvements in the consistent application of planning policy, and standardisation of Section 106 planning agreements to facilitate faster conclusion of planning permissions.

On waste, LG Inform performance data suggests that there is room for improvement. When compared to the benchmarking group, the Council has the lowest percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting at 34 per cent (well below the average of 46.38 per cent); and its amount of residual household waste per household at 457.40kg is higher than the average of 396.2kg. The Council is confident that fundamental service changes in this area supported by a new depot will improve this performance over the coming years.

## 13

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

## 5.2 Organisational and place leadership

The peer team heard consistent and positive feedback on how the Leader and chief executive are highly respected, engaging and collaborative, both inside the Council and by external partners across the Hampshire region.

After a long period of continuity at the helm of the organisation, there were changes of leadership with the new chief executive joining in December 2021, and the Leader of the Council taking up their role in November 2022. Both were described as instrumental in improving the visibility and credibility of the Council on the regional stage, both at the political and officer level. The peer team heard how the Leader is described as 'open and a key figure in the culture of change', and the chief executive as a 'breath of fresh air'.

Following the appointment of the chief executive, a new model of leadership was implemented, moving from a four executive head model to three new strategic director roles. Its senior officer leadership team, known as the Executive Management Team (EMT), consists of the chief executive and three strategic directors. EMT meets twice a month with the monitoring officer and democratic services manager also attending. The EMT works well together and brings together valuable experience from working in the Council as well as from other local authorities but could be more joined up on their approach to transformation. EMT may wish to build on the leadership development work it has already undertaken and consider development days to further strengthen working relationships.

Below the EMT, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) brings together senior managers and meets monthly. The peer team found that the SLT is highly engaged and proactively supportive of change. The Council may wish to consider clarifying the membership of the SLT and their corporate role; ensuring that SLT membership consistently cascade information to the wider staff community will be important.

Internally, both the Leader and the chief executive are accessible to staff. The employee forum meets approximately four times a year and is attended by both the chief executive and the Leader, with representatives from each service area who can raise issues and cascade information back to their teams. The chief executive holds regular staff briefings three or four times a year, both in person and virtually. At these briefings corporate updates are provided and staff are given a chance to ask questions. The staff networks also appreciate their good access to the chief



executive. This accessibility reinforces the clear value-led commitment that staff at all levels have to the Council and residents.

Externally, the Council listens to local people, residents and businesses and engages in a meaningful way, for example through the Resident's Insight Survey as previously mentioned, the Tenants Involvement Group (see Housing section 5.6) and Town and Parish Councils. Whilst acknowledging the existing partnership with the Town Parish Councils is productive, the peer team heard of the Town and Parish Councils' enthusiasm to further collaborate as partners and to develop a more meaningful relationship regarding budget for them to deliver services. The Council may therefore wish to consider this in more detail. The Council works effectively in partnership with community groups who are seen as respected and their relationship with the Council is strong.

The peer team heard that the Council used to be very inward looking, but now embodies strong partnership working and has an effective convening role with a range of partners. There was wholeheartedly positive feedback from neighbouring authorities, business partners, public sector partners and other stakeholders. The peer team heard how the Council is now seen as open and willing to collaborate.

The partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) is particularly well-established and mature. The NFNPA is the planning authority for the specific area and there are several service level agreements in place, covering things such as HR, finance, IT and technical professional services. The Council is encouraged to maintain its positive relationship with the NFNPA and harness any further opportunities, such as future accommodation and joint working on climate action and tourism.

Partnerships with other public sectors partners are also strong. On facilitating greater local involvement in the development of cultural activities, the Council has worked effectively with Arts Council England. A strategy is currently being developed, and the Council has established a strategic working group, which includes the NFNPA, Arts Council England, the NHS, the Hampshire Cultural Trust as well as other partners.

The Council has proactively built effective relationships with business partners and is an active player in these networks. The Leader sits on the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Leaders Board, and from this District representatives attend the

## 15

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson



Hampshire Prosperity Board, which replaced the previous Local Enterprise Partnerships covering Hampshire.

The Council is an active player in the development and delivery of the Solent Freeport, with the Leader on the Solent Freeport Board. The Council established the Waterside Steering Group and plays a crucial role in facilitating joint working across partners and delivering work on the Freeport priorities. The peer team encourages the Council to maintain its efforts to date and maximise the opportunities within the Freeport, such as wider NFDC representation in sub-regional groups.

The Council also partners with the voluntary sector, particularly on supporting vulnerable households across New Forest, and chairs a New Forest Partnership Meeting which brings together multiple organisations to share information and work on specific projects, as well as signposting support. The Council works collaboratively with FareShare, local foodbanks, and partners to support the weekly food larders and community hubs as part of a cost-of-living steering group. The peer team encourages the Council to further harness the voluntary sector in New Forest to enhance and improve service delivery.

### **5.3 Governance and culture**

The Council's governance and decision-making processes are strengthened by positive and respectful relationships between officers at all levels and the Cabinet, with the Leader's consensual style recognised and all political groups reporting good access to the chief executive.

The peer team consistently found that member and officer roles and responsibilities are well understood, with relationships described as trusting, constructive and collaborative. Collaborative working, particularly between senior officers and the Cabinet, has created a supportive culture.

The Council has improved its support to members, particularly via the revamped member induction programme in 2023, which included improved IT support, a new members' handbook, and a dedicated SharePoint site with resources uploaded. The peer team heard the induction programme has been well received and the regular all member briefings are welcomed.

Whilst the member induction programme is effective, the Council should ensure that the ongoing member development provision is robust. The peer team encourages

senior members to be more assertive in setting and steering the priorities of the Council, for example in developing their own agendas and encouraging recommendations for Cabinet committee meetings.

To ensure that New Forest District Council is a diverse and representative local council, it is vital that councillors from all backgrounds and experiences reflect the New Forest communities they serve. The peer team encourages the Council to continue its efforts to recruit more diverse people to consider standing to be local councillors. The LGA can provide support and information on this.

The Council revised its Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in May 2023, to coincide with the implementation of an electoral review and the reduction in the number of district councillors from 60 to 48. There are now three Overview and Scrutiny panels: Housing and Communities; Place and Sustainability; and Resources and Transformation. There is a clear appetite from members and officers to learn from best practice to provide more effective scrutiny. The Council is therefore encouraged to consider ways to strengthen and develop its Overview and Scrutiny function. This could include opposition-led scrutiny, as well as utilising LGA resources to learn from best practice and apply it in the New Forest.

There is evidence of cross-party working, with support across all political groups on the Council's transformation ambitions. Furthermore, the Council set up several task and finish groups with wide political representation to undertake reviews on areas such as health and leisure and sustainable waste, amongst others. The Council may wish to explore further opportunities for cross-party working to deepen political commitment to achieving the Council's goals.

One of the key priorities for the Council is to be an employer of choice, with a well-supported and dedicated workforce. Staff are New Forest District Council's greatest asset. They are passionate, enthusiastic and committed to the direction the Council is heading in. It was very clear to the peer team that the culture of the Council has improved, with a notable shift away from being siloed and inwardly facing to more collaborative and supportive. The Monthly Meet, launched in 2023, has played a key role in this shift. It provides an opportunity for staff to better understand other services and learn more about the work the Council does. The peer team also observed the Council's improved relations with its Trade Unions.

The annual staff survey gives employees a voice to express their opinions and is a

useful way to gather feedback to identify areas for improvement. Although only 57 per cent of staff responded to the 2024 staff survey, this was an increase of 16 per cent on the previous survey. Overall, 76 per cent of respondents would recommend the Council as a place to work. The Council's supportive culture was recognised, with 84 per cent of respondents agreeing that team members help and support each other. The peer team did hear about some scepticism on the anonymity of the staff survey so the Council may wish to reassure staff about this.

To shape the culture of the Council four values, known as LEAF, were established: Learning, Empathy, Ambition and Fairness. Whilst staff clearly accept the four LEAF values, many staff felt 'Learning' and 'Fairness' were not consistently applied across the organisation. In particular, there appears to be inconsistency on communications, with staff at the depot not always receiving key messages at the same time when it is cascaded to all staff.

The Council has historically been a risk averse organisation, but with robust risk management arrangements in place it can become bolder and braver with its decisions. It was clear to the peer team that members and the Senior Leadership Group are committed to effective risk management as they have led from the front in driving forward improvements to the council's risk management processes. The Audit Committee considers risk management and operates effectively, and the Annual Governance Statement tracks actions to completion.

Strategic risk management is embedded into service plans, with the service plans informing the Strategic Risk Register. In a tangible sign of good practice, the Council's Strategic Risk Register is published on the website, updated regularly, and kept under review. The Council could use the audit planning cycle for 2025/26 to ensure there is a 'Golden Thread' from the Strategic Risk Register through to individual Service Risk Registers.

In their last formal report covering 2021/22, no issues in relation to value for money were raised by the Council's external auditors. Although issues were raised over the valuation of both investment and leisure properties, this was due to differences of view on the methodology.

Like many other local authorities, the Council received a disclaimed opinion on its 2022/23 accounts. Draft accounts for 2023/24 have been published with no significant risks identified. The Council is hopeful that its auditors will complete the

audit of the 2023/24 accounts before the February 2025 deadline.

#### **5.4 Financial planning and management**

The Council is in a solid financial position because of a prudent approach to financial stability and proactive financial management over many years. Indeed, being financially responsible is one of the key strategic priorities of the Council's corporate plan.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covers the period up to 2028/29. The overall forecast deficit taking into the account the various funding assumptions and budget movements totals £466,000 for 2025/26, increasing to a cumulative £2.693m by 2028/29. With the General Fund budget set for 2024/25 at £24.536m, the deficit represents a gap equivalent to 10% by the end of the MTFP period.

The budget gap for 2025/2026 is primarily related to the additional costs of transitioning to the new waste service during 2025/2026, with an expectation of new burdens funding from April 2026. The larger gap from 2027/2028 is an assumption of a business rate reset, tied in with the Fair Funding Review.

To address the forecast deficit to 2028/29, the Council is undertaking an organisation wide transformation programme. The MTFP identified a targeted saving of £1.75m from the transformation programme.

There is a risk that the scope of the transformation programmes widens too far, and the Council wants to do too much at the same time; the peer team recommends that the scope of the transformation programme remains focused to ensure that officer capacity is not stretched and that the timetable and sequencing of the transformation programme is clear to all staff.

The Council's unearmarked reserves balance has remained constant at £3m since 2017. Whilst the level of the Council's reserves relative to spend is not as high as some of its neighbours, they are sufficient for the authority to smooth changes to income in the medium-term. The Council has been able to add to reserves largely as a result of additional interest income.

The Council has well-established and good financial monitoring systems in place. The financial position is reported on quarterly as part of the performance management framework and Cabinet members are confident in the monitoring process. To enhance reporting, the Council could consider formal corporate

#### **19**

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

processes for monthly reporting.

The peer team recognises the work done to date to make the Council more commercially aware, with ownership of around £30m of commercial property that is all located in the district, and the plans to improve the utilisation of office accommodation at Appletree Court to generate income. However, the peer team felt that much more can be done to comprehensively understand the Council's physical assets, their liabilities, and future commercial opportunities. Assets across the New Forest could include things such as car parks, public toilets, Tide Mill, and the waste depot site. Once the mapping has been complete, a strategy could be developed to deal with the assets as part of a coherent corporate asset management appraisal system. This work would help the Council consider opportunities to maximise its income, thereby further supporting its ambitions to be financially responsible.

The Council's transformation savings targets and its position on assets will need to be revisited in light of the Government's announcements on local government reorganisation.

## **5.5 Capacity for improvement**

The delivery of the Council's transformation programme, Future New Forest, is significant in helping the Council achieve financial sustainability, deliver services effectively, and to continually improve.

The peer team observed that the transformation programme is purpose led and has a solid evidence base. There is clear recognition of the Council's starting point and progress has already been achieved behind the scenes, but that the level of modernisation needed to deliver transformation is challenging.

Leadership of the transformation programme is strong, with commitment at all management levels to deliver it. The peer team observed that increased visibility of EMT's collective ownership of the transformation programme could strengthen the delivery of the programme.

Staff at all levels are passionate, committed, and believe in the need for change – they want to play their part in delivering the transformation programme. Despite this, adequate resourcing of the transformation programme is fundamental for its success. The peer team recommends that officer capacity is constantly reviewed to ensure that staff are not just delivering business as usual but can deliver transformation

priorities too. Giving staff permission to say no may enable this. The peer team also recognises that progress has been made on reducing silo-working, which could further increase staff capacity. The Council may look to build on this and go further by combining specialisms, such as communications, consultation and business intelligence.

Keeping up the morale of staff is equally important, especially during periods of significant change. The peer team observed that several internal policies and practices are not being consistently applied across the organisation, including staff, induction, flexible working, Job Evaluation, Sickness Policy, job titles and job descriptions. This has led to staff dissatisfaction and frustration, particularly in the areas of the Council who have felt that they are being treated unfairly. Addressing these inconsistencies may ensure that support for the transformation programme is not diminished.

One of the four themes of the transformation programme is customer and digital services. Standardising customer focuses processes and technology across all services will rely heavily on digital platforms. It will therefore be essential that staff have the required skills and that customers are able to use it.

The peer team heard that the Council's IT officers are well thought of, and they provide helpful support. However, there is inconsistent use of IT across teams within the Council, for example how documents are stored, IT training and the use of SharePoint. There are therefore opportunities to create more effective and efficient working practices. There could be an opportunity to establish expectations for IT use across the authority.

The Council is currently considering ways to improve the underutilised office accommodation at Appletree Court. This presents an opportunity to reexamine the layout of its office space and could result in potentially releasing some office space for third party tenants, providing a commercial opportunity for generating income. The peer team encourages the Council to engage staff sufficiently in these plans to ensure that their needs are met.

A consistent approach to IT use and the adoption of shared practices would benefit the organisation and improve efficiency. The Council's move to hybrid working thereby demonstrates the importance of developing capabilities in Microsoft Teams to enable effective working.

## 21

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

As previously mentioned, the Council may wish to explore how internal and external communication channels can increase the visible delivery of its priorities. The Council will be building on solid foundations with communications colleagues already working effectively with teams to develop messaging on service delivery and key projects. A corporate-wide communications strategy could help prioritise key campaigns and messaging to drive behaviour change, such as implementation of the waste strategy. Furthermore, given communications is at the heart of all Council activity and success, the peer team encourages the Council to better celebrate its achievements, no matter how big or small they are. On the transformation programme, quick wins could be regularly highlighted to build momentum and communications to residents could explain how the transformation programme will benefit them.

## **5.6 Housing**

Given meeting housing needs is one of the Council's top priorities in its corporate plan, the peer team were asked to consider it as an additional area of focus. Overall, the peer team found that Council has an ambitious and creative development and acquisition programme focused on local needs.

There is strong political support for the Council's housing priorities. The Peer Team found that the Council's portfolio holder, who is also the Deputy Leader, is committed and has a strong working relationship with the Housing Team and the Tenants Group. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel operates collaboratively and provides effective oversight.

The Council's commitment to delivering 600 new affordable homes by 2026 is ambitious, but challenges remain. Given the Council's emphasis on housing delivery, housing developers were keen to see greater articulation of housing needs to overcome localised opposition to housebuilding. The Council may therefore wish to establish a narrative to better articulate local housing requirements to overcome public and political opposition.

The Council cannot achieve its housing ambitions on its own; it will need to work effectively with private and public sector partners. Peers were impressed by the approach taken to affordable housing delivery which has embraced multiple approaches to increasing availability, including partnerships with housing associations, acquisitions from the open market, S106 acquisitions and direct delivery.



The peer team also welcomed the Council's emerging relationships with developers and private sector landlords, and noted the Council's constructive relationship with Hampshire County Council on helping people live independently at home.

The Council owns around 5,000 homes and has undertaken sufficient preparation in advance of the new social housing regulatory requirements, including staff training and tenant engagement. The Tenant Involvement Group set out that attitudes to tenants had shifted recently to a more positive and equal relationship. The group meets regularly and is a forum to discuss ideas around priorities and service delivery. Further involvement of tenants in policy development, scrutiny and training could strengthen their voice within the organisation, putting the Council in a stronger position for regulatory inspection.

The Council is rightly proud that 81% of respondents are satisfied overall with their council managed property. However, only 29.1% of tenants are satisfied with the Council's approach to complaint management and the Council recognises this is an area to improve upon. The existing tenant engagement channels provides an opportunity to grow their involvement and influence, and work collaboratively to resolve issues.

In February 2024, Cabinet agreed to undertake a full review of the Local Plan. It is worth noting that any developments on local government reorganisation in Hampshire may impact Local Plan activity. The peer team observed that some aspects of the planning process are delaying development, although this is not a problem just for New Forest. The Council will therefore need to be mindful of future challenges and opportunities for its development programme.

On homelessness, the Council has an effective operational response to homelessness pressures and works collaboratively with local charities and groups to tackle rough sleeping, for example with The Crossings charity on housing register support in the Hythe area. Furthermore, there has been a reduction in rough sleeping over the past three years, which is a significant achievement.

The Council also partners with the New Forest Disability Information Service to provide support for vulnerable residents who have been discharged from hospital to help them live independent lives at home. It also works effectively with Hampshire County Council on adaptations and specialist accommodation needs.

## 23

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson



## 6. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. It has already been acknowledged in this report that the peer review took place before the announcements on devolution by the Government. It is important to recognise that while addressing key priorities, the Council will need to divert officer capacity to support potential local government reorganisation planning.

The LGA will continue to provide on-going support to the council. Following publication of CPC report you need to produce and publish an Action Plan within five months of the time on site. As part of the CPC, the council are also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within twelve months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on their website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day.

The date for the progress review at New Forest District Council is October 2025.

In the meantime, Will Brooks, Principal Adviser for the South East, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Will is available to discuss any further support the council requires.

Email: [William.Brooks@local.gov.uk](mailto:William.Brooks@local.gov.uk).

Tel: 07949054421



# Action plan

Corporate peer challenge 2024

March 2025

# Introduction

## Recommendations from the CPC team

Following the completion of the corporate peer challenge in December 2024 a feedback report has been published by the LGA including a list of recommendations for consideration. The report also included key observations and comments from the peer team based upon their findings from the peer challenge.

We are required to publish an action plan within five months of the completion of the peer challenge. This document outlines associated actions, timelines, and tracks progress towards implementation of the recommendations. Included within this action plan are additional actions which arise from the peer teams observations and commentary.

It is acknowledged that the peer challenge took place prior to the announcements on devolution by the Government, which may impact the resources required to address key priorities, as officers' capacity will be diverted to support reorganisation planning.

A progress review by the LGA will be scheduled to allow feedback and report progress made against each of the recommendations and discuss impact and learning. A progress report will then be published by the LGA.

# Recommendations

The following are the 10 recommendations from the corporate peer challenge feedback report.

No.	Recommendation	Associated actions		Timescales	Owner
1	Clarify priorities and timelines for delivery	1.1	Revisit priorities and categorise considering LGR (continue, review and pause)	Jan 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune
		1.2	Seek formal approval for revised priority list, following informal consultation with the Leader and Cabinet members	March/April 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune
		1.3	Reallocate resources based on revised priorities in the 2025/26 budget.	March 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune
2	Create an overarching corporate narrative and communicate proactively with staff, members and local people	2.1	Develop concise view (graphic/one pager) of priorities to support internal & external comms	April 2025	Kate Ryan
		2.2	Develop narrative to support revised priorities (aligned to LGR report)	May 2025	Kate Ryan/Sara Hamilton
		2.3	Prioritise communications messaging and resource aligned to corporate plan, agreeing gold, silver and bronze focus	June 2025	Kate Ryan/Sara Hamilton
		2.4	Celebrate successes linked to revised priorities to ensure continuity and reinforcement of narrative (link to recommendation #10) Annual Report (July 2025) End of year look back (December 2025)	Ongoing	Leadership team/Sara Hamilton

		2.5	Support staff understanding of their role in delivering priorities through clear links from corporate plan to individual performance through regular development conversations. Review of performance reviews and one to ones being undertaken within People Strategy Roll out	October 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond/Leadership team
3	Design and deliver a robust member and senior officer development programme	3.1	Member training opportunities, including self-serve, Member briefings and LGA sessions will be themed to support Members' understanding of the different roles of an elected Member and how training can support their development. This will take account of Local Government Reorganisation implications. Training will be prioritised based on the feedback received from a recent Member Development survey, which includes strengthening Overview and Scrutiny (See 4 below).	May 2025	Tanya Coulter / Matt Wisdom
		3.2	Support members in their roles across key programme governance including waste, transformation and LGR	Ongoing	Tanya Coulter / Matt Wisdom
		3.3	Build on the informal EMT/Leader meetings to set up dedicated EMT/Cabinet development sessions	Ongoing	Kate Ryan
		3.4	Continue leadership and management development programmes with further	Ongoing	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond

			opportunities linked to the behaviours framework and development of leadership skills to support LGR		
4	Consider ways to strengthen your Overview and Scrutiny function	4.1	Strategic Director linked to each O&S panel to provide direct support to panel members	January 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Strategic Director Lead/Matt Wisdom
		4.2	Agenda planning and topic prioritisation meetings take place with the lead SD, Chairman and Vice-Chairman	January 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Strategic Director Lead/Matt Wisdom
		4.3	Specific topic briefings to be held i.e. Housing Regulation, to develop member knowledge and support scrutiny role	Housing – March 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Strategic Director Lead / Tanya Coulter/Matt Wisdom
		4.4	Develop an ‘essential’ training package for all councillors that serve on Overview and Scrutiny Panels, comprising delivered and self serve training, to include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;S Chairman training</li> <li>• Questioning skills training</li> <li>• Scrutiny essentials</li> <li>• LGA resources</li> </ul>	May 2025	Tanya Coulter / Matt Wisdom
5	Ensure there is collective ownership of the transformation programme by the Executive Management Team	5.1	Governance structure supports reporting and discussion at directorate level with escalation to Transformation Board	March 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
		5.2	Further embed governance arrangements, including reporting of issues and decisions that conflict with agreed strategic direction	March 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond

		5.3	Revise business case considering LGR and ensure new focus is well communicated and anchored in governance reporting	June 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
		5.4	Consider and implement opportunities to improve EMT visible leadership of change initiatives	September 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
6	Apply internal policies and practices consistently across the Council	6.1	Investment in additional OD and Employee Engagement resources agreed	Feb 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
		6.2	Induction framework being revisited to ensure consistency, including 'induction essentials' video for new starters and enhanced guidance for managers	May 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
		6.3	Behaviours framework being developed to ensure consistency	July 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
		6.4	Different ways to communicate key messages and cascade information to operational staff will be implemented including briefing notes and visual updates where appropriate	April 2025	Strategic Directors/Rebecca Drummond
		6.5	Review local arrangements to ensure policies and practices consistently applied and create baseline data to monitor improvements. Linked to People Strategy delivery	September 2025	Alan Bethune/Rebecca Drummond
7	Develop an Assets Strategy and Action Plan	7.1	Initial engagement with Overview and Scrutiny panel to test direction of travel of emerging strategy	March 2025 <i>Delivered</i>	Alan Bethune

		7.2	Adoption of Asset Strategy and Action Plan	July 2025	Alan Bethune
		7.3	Commence discussions with Town and Parish Council and other partners	July 2025	Alan Bethune
8	Demonstrate further commitment to carbon reduction with a clear action plan	8.1	Continue to decarbonise the council's housing stock and housing of all tenures in line with the Greener Housing Strategy	Council housing stock EPC 'C' or higher by 2030	Richard Knott/Sophie Tuffin
		8.2	Ensure low carbon development through alignment with the Planning for Climate Change SPD and wider Local Plan Review	Ongoing	James Carpenter/Tim Guymer
		8.3	Refresh of the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan to ensure ambitious carbon reduction, climate adaptation and nature recovery outcomes	March 2026	James Carpenter/Roxanne King
9	Continue the good practice in housing and consider applying successful approaches to the wider organisation	9.1	Establish a list of key good practice items and outcomes	October 2025	Richard Knott/Paul Thomas
		9.2	Knowledge transfer opportunities with wider SLT	October 2025	Richard Knott/Paul Thomas
		9.3	Use the topic based 'Monthly Meet' staff engagement forum as a learning opportunity to share examples of Housing best practice and improvement initiatives	September 2025	Richard Knott/Paul Thomas
10	Remember to celebrate your achievements no matter how small or big they are	10.1	Prioritise and develop an approach and multi-level offer for all staff and implement focussed activity for operational services across Place and Housing	August 2025	Kate Ryan/EMT



		10.2	Build a values based, equitable recognition element into the implementation of the Behavioural framework	October 2025	EMT/Leadership Team
		10.3	Leadership team development session on rewards and recognition, to shape and embed this across the organisation.	August 2025	EMT/Leadership Team
		10.4	Build in time to celebrate success into all staff, directorate and team sessions.	Ongoing	EMT/Leadership Team

## Additional actions

The following are additional actions and considerations which arose from the peer team's commentary and observations.

No.	Observation	Actions	Timescales	Owner
1	Service planning and delivery to proactively consider opportunities for enhancing inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include equality and inclusivity considerations into service planning template and associated guidance</li> <li>• Consider knowledge gaps and way to create greater understanding and awareness of equality and inclusion across all staff groups in support of improved diversity and inclusion in the services we provide</li> <li>• Link to People Strategy and the creation and development of staff forums</li> </ul>	August 2025	Alan Bethune / Rebecca Drummond
2	Policy development to include consideration of equality, diversity and inclusivity impacts at the outset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership team development session to explore the LG Equality Framework as it relates to service delivery</li> <li>• EMT to ensure that where relevant policy development includes an equality impact assessment</li> </ul>	October 2025  Ongoing	Kate Ryan  Strategic Directors
3	Development Management – Standardisation of Section 106 planning agreements to facilitate faster conclusion of planning permission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Developer Forum to explore the issues raised with the service leads with an initial meeting by the summer.</li> </ul>	July 2025	James Carpenter
4	SLT – Clarify corporate role of wider leadership team members and ensure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions to be summarised for each agenda item, including for</li> </ul>	May 2025	Kate Ryan

	clear expectation set to consistently cascade information	cascade, engagement, learning etc.		
5	Town & Parish Councils – Explore opportunities to develop a more meaningful relationship regarding budget for them to deliver services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased regularity of meeting with Town and Parish Council clerks</li> <li>Collaboration on LGR with a joint event planned to increase understanding</li> <li>Developing a Community Asset transfer policy</li> <li>Resourcing allocated for capacity and delivery</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p><i>Delivered</i></p>	<p>Kate Ryan</p> <p>Richard Knott</p> <p>Alan Bethune</p>
6	Freeport – Maintain efforts to maximise the opportunities within the Freeport, such as wider NFDC representation in sub-regional groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterside Steering group continues to bring together key partners, and ensure a focus on NFDC benefits.</li> <li>Deputy Leader attending Solent Freeport Board and FRAC.</li> <li>Economic development and growth capacity re-established to help take forwards Totton masterplan and skills agenda</li> <li>Chief Executive taking a lead role in the Mayoral Strategic authority programme board</li> </ul>	Ongoing	James Carpenter
7	Voluntary sector – Further harness the voluntary sector in New Forest to enhance and improve service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to deliver, and enhance the outcomes of the Community Forum, Cost of Living Steering Group, Community and CIL Grants Schemes, SLAs with key Voluntary Sector Providers, Health &amp; Wellbeing Initiatives and delivery</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Richard Knott

		of Disability awareness programmes.		
8	Continue efforts to recruit more diverse people to consider standing to be a local councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political group leaders to consider how their work recruiting, developing and selecting candidates to stand for future elections can improve wider representation of the local community.</li> <li>Review engagement opportunities ahead of future Town &amp; parish and District elections</li> </ul>	<p>April 2026</p> <p>TBC</p>	Kate Ryan/ Matt Wisdom
9	Establish expectations for consistent IT use across the authority, including how documents are stored, IT training and the use of SharePoint and M365 tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create plan to deliver 'Digital Skills for all' to facilitate learning, technology adoption and best practice usage.</li> <li>Continued training and knowledge sharing with the ICT service desk to then deliver consistent best practice and meaningful messaging to our staff.</li> <li>Creation of 3 new ICT best practice guides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Where to start a digital conversation"</li> <li>"Where to save my files"</li> <li>"Best practice guide to using my SharePoint Team Site"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	August 2025	Alan Bethune/ Rebecca Drummond
10	Housing – Further involve tenants in policy development, scrutiny and training to strengthen their voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver actions in the Tenant Engagement Strategy.</li> </ul>	April 2026	Richard Knott

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a menu of engagement options and learning opportunities for staff</li> <li>• Increase participation across demographics and localities.</li> <li>• Complete the Tenant data survey and analyse results to create targeted approach</li> </ul>		
11	Establish a narrative to better articulate local housing requirements to overcome public and political resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressing the Local Plan from current Reg 18 Issues and Options stage through to Reg 19 will allow wider views to be gathered</li> <li>• Undertaking a range of engagement activities both with the community/ Towns &amp; Parishes and with elected members, through the Local Plan Member Working Group and more widely.</li> <li>• Undertake Green Belt review as part of the local plan evidence base to better understand capacity in the district, in line with the NPPF principles of "Grey Belt"</li> <li>• Partnership working across Hampshire, and with the National Park Authority on the special landscape constraints and designations that constrain growth in the district, to arrive at an appropriate housing number.</li> <li>• Specific work with officers planning committee members to</li> </ul>	April 2026	James Carpenter

		understand and act upon the current and future implications of a lack of 5-year housing land supply, and the impacts of not meeting the NPPF Housing Delivery Test (application of a 20% buffer) on planning decision taking.		
--	--	---	--	--



# Corporate plan priorities – key deliverables review

March 2025

# Introduction

## Local government reorganisation





The recent corporate peer challenge and the emerging local government reorganisation (LGR) discussions has prompted a review of the key deliverables in support of the Council's priorities to ensure our ambitions are balanced with our capacity and that our capacity is focussed on the right activities.

The Corporate Plan and Future New Forest remain the agreed policy frameworks and ongoing service delivery continues to be central to ensuring the needs of our residents are met.

This review enables a discussion to bring about more clarity on the delivery of priorities and associated timescales, to focus resources and consider the potential impacts of local government reorganisation.

## Status

The delivery activities within each of the corporate plan themes have been initially assessed and categorised on the following basis:





- 
- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Continue |  | Rationale supports continuation based on impact and/or nearing completion |
|----------|---|---|
- 
- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Consider |  | Proportionate response with limited resources |
|----------|---|---|
- 
- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| Stop |  | Timescales and capacity required suggest that activities should be paused |
|------|---|---|
- 
- |         |   |                                 |
|---------|---|---------------------------------|
| New/LGR |  | New activities arising from LGR |
|---------|---|---------------------------------|




## People

Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.









### Helping those in our communities with the greatest need

Delivery activity	
	Community forum
	Universal credit rollout
	Careline digitalisation
	Careline growth

Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives

Delivery activity	
	Cultural strategy
	CCTV expansion
	Community grants (annual)
	Cultural strategy (implementation)
	Development of new Health and wellbeing strategy
	Community strategy





## Meeting housing needs




Delivery activity	
	Homelessness strategy
	Social Housing Decarbonisation fund bid wave 3
	Tenant satisfaction survey part 2
	Social Housing Regulation Act (Implementation)
	Private Sector Housing strategy review
	Affordable Housing Delivery action plan
	Development of new Empty homes strategy
	Housing strategy consultation/publish (aligned with local plan timescales)

## Place

Delivering growth, opportunity and services that shape our place now and for future generations, within a unique environmental context, to ensure we remain a special place to live, work and visit.












## Shaping our place now and for future generations

Delivery activity	
	Local Plan (issues and options)
	Dibden Bay planning response
	A326 upgrade
	Nationally significant infrastructure project - Fawley Pipeline

	Development Management Review
	NEW – Community infrastructure levy (CIL) Community
	NEW – CIL Strategic










\*Planning performance agreement

## Protecting our climate, coast and natural world

Delivery activity	
	Public space protection order (PSPO) Review
	Air quality strategy
	Emergency planning and business continuity review
	Christchurch Bay flood/coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) approval
	Hurst Spit to Lymington
	Climate and nature emergency strategy and action plan
	Air quality strategy (implementation)
	Fleet strategy
	Climate/Sustainability Impact Decision Tool Assessment
	Coastal destination strategy
	Coastal partnership model

## Caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods and open spaces in a modern and responsive way


Delivery activity
-------------------

	Waste Strategy mobilisation and rollout
	Bartec in cab technology rollout
	Hardley depot move
	Marsh Lane depot essential works
	Ringwood depot expansion
	Review of commercial waste
	Simpler recycling legislation
	Open Spaces review
	Parking strategy


## Prosperity

Promoting a strong local economy that delivers its inclusive aspirations through effective partnerships, attracting investment, and increasing skills and employment opportunities.


Maximising the benefits of inclusive economic growth and investment

Delivery activity	
	Economic strategy / prospectus

Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow


Delivery activity	
	Totton Masterplan

## Championing skills and access to job opportunities


Delivery activity	
	Employment and skills strategy

## Future New Forest








### Putting our customers at the heart




Delivery activity	
	Resident insight (2025 survey)

### Being an employer of choice







Delivery activity	
	People strategy

### Being financially responsible








Delivery activity	
	Financial regulations update
	Strategic Asset review (inc. Lymington Town Hall, community assets)
	Strategic Asset implementation
	Appletree court (ATC) essential works project
	NFEC Future arrangements
	Claymeadow depot Future agreed
	Eling Tide Mill (urgent works/repairs)

	Eling Tide Mill (long-term asset strategy)
	ATC South Wing business case works
	NEW - Transformation business case revisit

## Designing modern and innovative services

Delivery activity	
	Digital strategy (delivery)
	Digital Transformation: Customer platform
	Digital Transformation: Data platform
	Digital Transformation: Housing Maintenance
	Digital Transformation: Asset Management software
	Digital Transformation: Regulatory Services software

## Other corporate activity

Delivery activity	
	Elections
	Scheme of Delegations update
	Business Planning Framework
	Member development (proportionate to LGR context)
	Corporate Dashboards
	Communications strategy (delivery as per service plan)
	NEW - Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation



This page is intentionally left blank



**Cabinet – 2 April 2025****Principal Risk and Risk Management Policy Update**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	The Risk Management Policy (Appendix 1), and Principal Risks (Appendix 2), now included within this report contains the significant risks, as identified by senior and executive council officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holders, in the Council achieving the priorities set out in the 'For people, place, prosperity Corporate Plan 2024-28'
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<b>1) To consider the Principal Risk Register and revised Risk Management Policy and recommend adoption by Council.</b>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	To assist the council in being aware of risks and making evidence-based decisions, thereby adding value to their processes and outcomes.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader / All
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer) and Paul Whittles Assistant Director - Finance
Officer Contact	James Clarke Insurance and Risk Officer 023 8028 5002 James.Clarke@nfdc.gov.uk

## **Introduction and background**

1. The Risk Management Policy (Appendix 1) has been created to give clarity of approach to risk management at the Council, and to helpfully define process and roles and responsibilities. This gives a structured approach to ensure risks and opportunities are reviewed across all Services, Portfolio's and Corporately, in a consistent way.
2. The Council's Principal Risk (Appendix 2) has been reshaped to truly focus on the highest level of risk to the Council. The risks listed will assist further in the Council achieving the priorities set out in the 'Community Matters Corporate Plan 2020-24'.
3. Risk management aims to identify the risks that may impact on the Council achieving its objectives. Its purpose is to evaluate, design and implement effective measures to reduce both the likelihood and potential impact of these risks occurring.
4. The Council has a statutory responsibility to have in place arrangements for managing risks under the Accounts and Audit Regulations, which require a sound system of internal control, facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and includes arrangements for the management of risk. As such it features strongly in the Council's Local Code of Practice for Corporate Governance and is one of the primary assurance strands in the Annual Governance Statement, which places significant reliance on a robust risk management framework.
5. The Risk Management Policy and Principal Risk Register have been developed through collaboration among senior and executive council officers to ensure a cohesive approach to identifying and documenting these risks. A thorough review was conducted by The Audit Committee in January, their feedback has been considered.

## **Risk Management Policy**

6. Developing and improving public services requires opportunities to be taken whilst managing the risks involved. In recent years all sectors of the economy have focused on management of risk as the key to making organisations successful. It enables organisations to deliver their objectives whilst protecting the interests of their stakeholders. New Forest District Council is dedicated to providing its stakeholders with the best possible service.
7. The effective management of risk is central to providing a safe and healthy environment in which to live and work and it allows the

Council to make the most of opportunities, whilst understanding and minimising the risks, where possible. This policy sets out how New Forest District Council manages its risks, and what we aim to do in the future to maintain our high standards in this area.

### **Principal Risk Register**

8. Appendix 2 presents the Principal Risk Register, which identifies the most significant risks encountered by the council. This section evaluates and scores these risks while outlining proposed mitigation strategies. The recommended actions for risk mitigation are closely aligned with the available portfolio resources and, in some cases, depend on collaboration with partners to successfully achieve the council's objectives.
9. A live and relevant document focused on risk principal approach for our council provides crucial benefits. It maintains up-to-date information that accurately reflects the specific risks and challenges unique to the district. By presenting this information in a concise format, stakeholders can swiftly identify and understand the key risk factors and mitigation strategies. This clarity facilitates more effective decision-making and allows the council to respond proactively to emerging risks, ultimately strengthening the overall risk management framework and ensuring the district's resilience.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

10. The recommendations aim to improve the effective execution of all corporate plan priorities by presenting risk mitigation strategies that tackle the overarching vulnerabilities faced by the Council.

### **Options appraisal**

11. Principal risks are essential for the council's effective risk management. Without this register, we may face significant operational, financial, and reputational challenges, highlighting the need for proper prioritisation. The Risk Management policy update will further strengthen our framework by incorporating best practices and aligning with current regulations to address potential threats proactively.

### **Consultation undertaken**

12. Internal consultation with Assistant and Strategic Directors and Chief Executive and The Audit Committee.

### **Financial and resource implications**

13. There are none arising directly from this report, although strong risk management and a solid understanding of risk helps to support robust financial management.

### **Legal implications**

14. If the legal principal risks are not managed this does bring risk to the council.

### **Risk assessment**

15. The Principal Risk Register is evidence of the risk assessment for the highest level of risk.

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

16. If the climate principal risks are not managed this does bring risk to the council.

### **Equalities implications**

17. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

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

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

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

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Risk Management Policy

Appendix 2 – Principal Risk Register

#### **Background Papers:**

None

# Risk Management Policy

2025

# Contents

## Page

<b>3</b>	1. Introduction
<b>3</b>	2. Risk Management Policy Statement
<b>4</b>	3. Risk Appetite
<b>4</b>	4. Roles and Responsibilities
<b>6</b>	5. Corporate Responsibility – The Three Lines of Defence
<b>8</b>	5. How Do We identify Risks?
<b>9</b>	6. How Do We Evaluate Risks?
<b>11</b>	7. How We Respond to Risks?
<b>13</b>	8. Risk Reporting
<b>14</b>	9. Document History
<b>15</b>	10. Definitions

# 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the approach the Council takes with regards to its responsibility to manage risks and opportunities using a structured, focused and proportional methodology. Risk management is integral to all policy and project planning and operational management throughout the Council and integrates with our corporate governance and performance management.

This approach to risk management actively supports the achievement of the agreed actions, projects and programmes included as set out in the Council's adopted Corporate Plan.

The Council believes that risk needs to be managed rather than avoided and that consideration of risk should not stifle innovation and creativity.

## 2. Risk Management Policy Statement

We consider risk management to be a fundamental function that supports and aligns with our vision, values, and strategic objectives. This encompasses our commitment to operating in an effective and efficient manner while fostering confidence within our community. Acknowledging that risk is inherent in all our activities, our policy mandates the proactive identification, assessment, and management of significant risks. We strive to embed risk management into all operations and initiatives at New Forest District Council. It is essential that risk management is integrated into every process, project, and strategic decision, including procurement and contracting. We will ensure that our partnerships and third-party relationships adhere fully to the Council's Risk Management Policy.

Our approach to risk management must be tailored to our organisation, reflecting our size and the diverse nature of our operations while leveraging our skills and capabilities to their fullest potential. Risk management is most effective when functioning as an enabling tool, necessitating a consistent, well communicated, and formalised process across New Forest District Council. Defining the acceptable level of risk exposure, will provide clarity regarding which risks may threaten New Forest District Council's ability to achieve its objectives.

The risk management policy statement, along with its supporting documentation, establishes an integrated framework that empowers New Forest District Council to manage risk effectively. By implementing our risk management policy, we assure all stakeholders that risk identification and management are pivotal in the execution of our Corporate Plan priorities and related objectives. We will engage, empower, and assign ownership to all staff members in the identification and management of risks. Risk management activities will receive ongoing support and oversight from senior management through regular discussions and appropriate actions.

This includes comprehensive and routine evaluations of significant risks, assessment of mitigation strategies, and the implementation of actions to reduce risks to an acceptable level where possible. Effective risk management will be an integral component of both strategic and operational planning, as well as the day-to-day operations.

# 3.Risk Appetite

The council's risk appetite is characterised as moderate, emphasising a cautious approach that limits exposure to certain levels of risk. This strategic stance is designed to ensure that the council can achieve satisfactory outcomes while maintaining stability and fostering long-term sustainability in its decision-making processes.

The council's current overall risk appetite is categorised as MODERATE (refer to the table below for definitions). This classification indicates that the council is receptive to innovative approaches and is willing to explore options that may present substantial rewards, even when accompanied by higher levels of risk. Nevertheless, the council prefers safer delivery methods that entail a lower risk, particularly for services mandated by statute.

Risk Appetite Definitions	
Avoid	No appetite. Not prepared to take risk.
Adverse	Prepared to accept only the very lowest levels of risk, with the preference being for ultra-safe delivery options, while recognising that these will have little or no potential for reward/return.
Cautious	Willing to accept some low risks, while maintaining an overall preference for safe delivery options despite the probability of these having mostly restricted potential for reward/return.
Moderate	Tending always towards exposure to only modest levels of risk in order to achieve acceptable outcomes.
Open	Prepared to consider all delivery options and select those with the highest probability of productive outcomes, even when there are elevated levels of associated risk.
Hungry	Eager to seek original/creative/pioneering delivery options and to accept the associated substantial risk levels in order to secure successful outcomes and meaningful reward/return.

# 4. Risk Management Roles and Responsibilities

The key roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

## Council

Consider and adopt the Council's risk management strategy and framework and any amendments/updates as recommended from time to time by the Council's Audit Committee.

## Cabinet

Oversee the Principal Risk Register and the proposed risk mitigation plans, ensuring effective implementation.

Stay informed about the risk management implications associated with decision-making.



### **Audit Committee**

Advocate for the robust adherence to the Risk Management Policy and Principal Risk Register, emphasising the need for rigorous oversight and thorough evaluation.

Deliver independent assurance to the Council regarding the sufficiency and effectiveness of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, underscoring the challenges inherent in maintaining high standards of risk oversight.

### **Executive Management Team (EMT)**

Provide corporate leadership of risk management throughout the Council.

Agree an effective Council-wide framework for the management of risks and opportunities.

Advise Members on effective risk management and ensure Members receive relevant risk information.

Ensure that the Council complies with the corporate governance requirements relating to risk management.

Own the Council's Principal Risk Register and ensure that risks are reviewed as part of the wider Council's performance arrangements.

Monitor the implementation of key mitigation plans and controls assurance programmes.

Ensure processes are in place to report any perceived new/emerging (key) risks or failures of existing control measures.

### **Service and Senior Managers**

Ensure that risk management, within their areas of responsibility, is implemented in line with the Council's Risk Management Policy.

Own their Service Risk Registers and identify cross-cutting risks as well as risks arising from their areas of responsibility; prioritising and initiating mitigating actions.

Ensure regular review of the Risk Registers as part of wider Council performance, report risk to Management and EMT on any perceived new and emerging risks, or failures of existing control measures.

Promote and share good practice across service areas.

Challenge risk owners and actions to ensure that controls are operating as intended.

### **Insurance and Risk Officer**

Lead on the development and manage the implementation of the Risk Management Policy behalf of the Council.

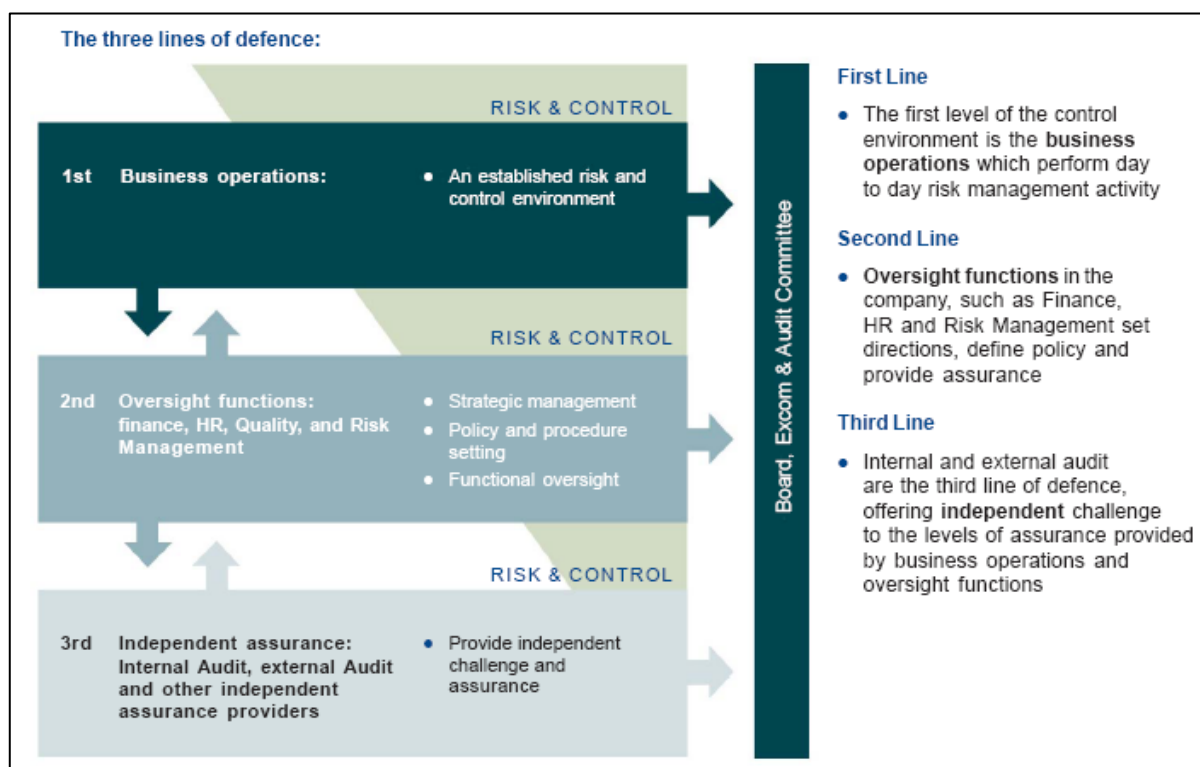
Undertake full reviews of the Council's Principal Risk Register and approach and update accordingly and present any revisions to EMT, Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council for endorsement.

Use a range of resources to analyse management information to support recommendations for improvements to risk management policies and procedures.

## 5. Corporate Responsibility – The Three Lines of Defence

The three lines of defence concept is widely known among the insurance, audit and banking sectors as a risk governance framework. The concept can be used as the primary means to demonstrate and structure roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for decision making, risk and control to achieve effective risk management, governance and assurance.

The following table is an example of the three lines of defence concept:



### First line of defence

As the first line of defence, Service/Senior Managers own and manage risks within their service area. They are also responsible for implementing appropriate corrective action to address, process and control weaknesses. Policies and procedures support Service/Senior Managers in setting best practice in their areas of responsibility. In addition, they report any perceived new and/or emerging risks or, failure of control measures to their Strategic or Assistant Director.

Service/Senior Managers are also responsible for maintaining effective internal controls and managing risk on a day-to-day basis. They identify, assess, control and manage risks ensuring that their services are delivered in accordance with the Council's aims and objectives.

## **Second line of defence**

The second line of defence relates to the strategic direction, policies and procedures provided by the Council's corporate functions (e.g. Finance, Legal Services, Procurement and HR). These teams are responsible for defining policies, setting direction, ensuring compliance and providing assurance.

Each department will have members of staff that belong to professional bodies, for example ACCA, which gives assurances that these corporate functions focus on delivering best practice for the council.

## **Third line of defence**

Internal Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve the Council's operations. It helps the Council accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The aim of the Internal Audit work programme is to provide assurance to management, in relation to the business activities, systems or processes under review that the framework of internal control, risk management and governance is appropriate and operating effectively; and risks to the achievement of the Council's objectives are identified, assessed and managed to a defined acceptable level.

Such risks are identified through senior management liaison and Internal Audit's own assessment of risk. Inspectors and regulators also provide assurance on the management of risk and delivery of objectives.

External Audit provide an independent review of the Council's Annual Financial Report, including the Annual Governance Statement. They provide overall assurance on the accuracy of the Council's financial reporting, and provide commentary on key areas, such as Value for Money.

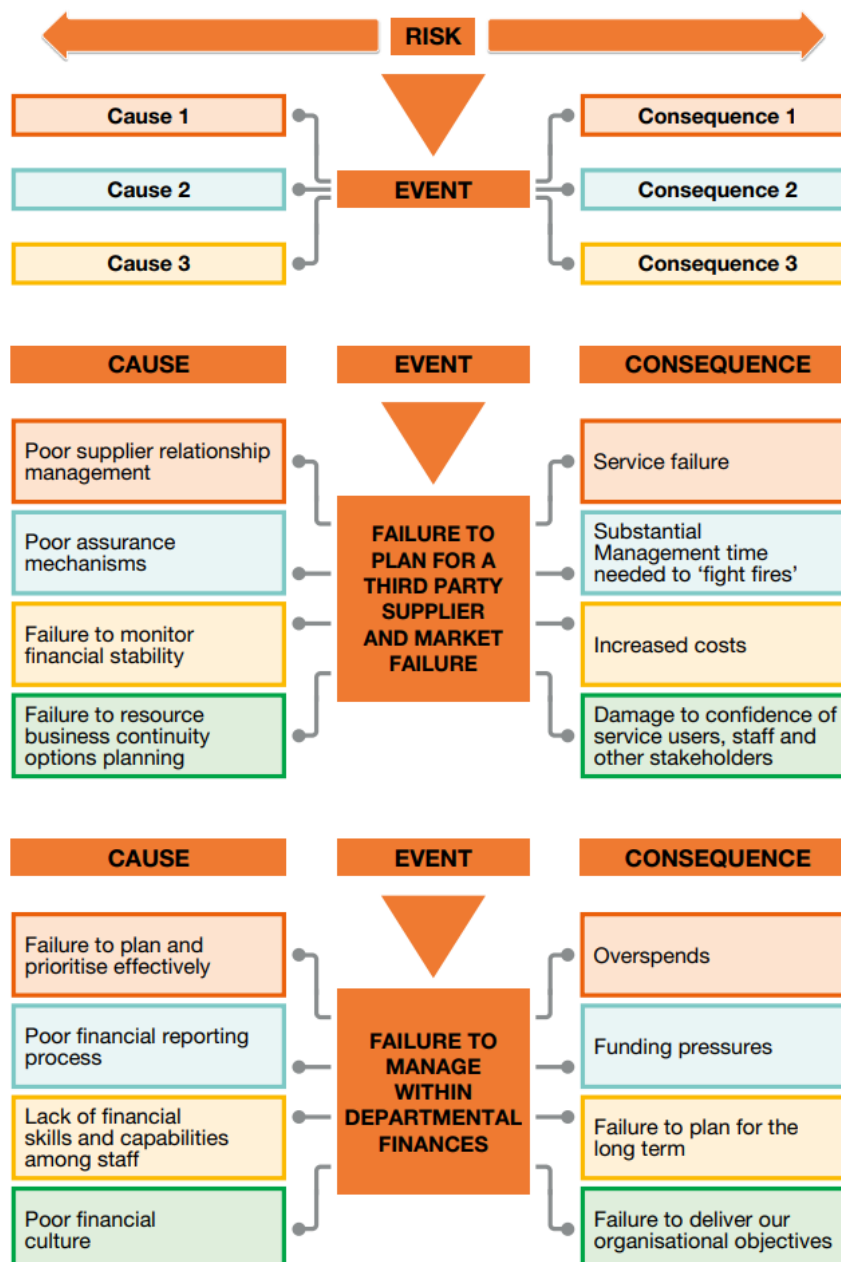
## **Audit Committee**

The Committee is tasked with overseeing the financial affairs of the Council. Its responsibilities include reviewing the Council's accounts and overseeing both internal and external audit activities. Additionally, the Committee monitors the development and implementation of risk management and governance policies within the Council, as well as policies related to whistle-blowing, anti-fraud, corruption, and bribery. It also oversees Treasury Management activities, approves the Council's Annual Governance Statement, and ensures compliance with various published standards and controls.

# 5. How do we identify risks?

The Bow Tie Risk Analysis is a professional risk management tool designed to visualise and manage risks effectively. The diagram consists of a central risk event, with potential causes illustrated on the left and consequences on the right, resembling a bow tie. Preventive controls are identified alongside the causes, while mitigating controls accompany the consequences.

In risk management, "controls" are measures implemented to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring or to minimise its impact when it does, and they can be classified as preventive, or corrective. Conversely, "mitigating controls" are specifically designed to address and reduce the severity of identified risks after they have been assessed. While all mitigating controls are a subset of controls, their primary focus is on reactive measures, such as insurance policies or emergency response plans, aimed at lessening the consequences of potential incidents.



## 6. How Do We Evaluate Risks?

The Council evaluates its identified risks on a four-point scale on the likelihood or probability of the risk occurring and the impact caused should the risk occur being rated between low and significant.

A risk matrix is a key tool used to analyse the likelihood and impact of a risk. The Council uses a 4X4 risk matrix, with the score determined by multiplying the 'likelihood' score with the 'impact' score.

Scoring risks allows them to be compared with other risks and enables risk owners to prioritise and allocate more resources to those risks posing the greatest threat to the Council's objectives.

The Council has chosen to divide the rating into RAG bands as shown on the example risk map below:

	I M P A C T			
	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	Major (3)	Significant (4)
Highly Likely (4)	4	8	12	16
Likely (3)	3	6	9	12
Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8
Highly Unlikely (1)	1	2	3	4

## Impact Rating

The following table provides the definitions which should be used when determining whether a risk would have a Low, Moderate, Major or Significant impact.

Impact is defined as the impact to the organisation should the risk materialise.

Each potential risk area should be considered and the highest impact scored should be the score (1-4) that is used to define the overall impact score.

	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	Major (3)	Significant (4)
Financial	Less than £20,000	£20,000 or over and less than £130,000	£130,000 or over and less than £500,000	£500,000 plus
Service Provision	Minor effect	Slightly reduced	Service suspended short term/reduced	Service suspended long term Statutory duties not delivered
Health and Safety	Minor Injury	Broken bones/illness Lost time, accident or occupational ill health	Loss of life/major illness – major injury incl broken limbs/hospital admittance. Major ill health	Major loss of life/large scale major illness
Morale	No effect	Some hostile relationship and minor non cooperation	Industrial action	Mass staff leaving/unable to attract staff
Reputation	No media attention / minor letters	Adverse local media	Adverse national publicity	Remembered for years
Government Relations	One off single complaint	Poor assessment(s)	Service taken over temporarily	Service taken over permanently

## Likelihood Rating

Likelihood is the chance of a risk materialising.

It is unlikely that in many cases the probability of a risk occurring can be calculated in a statistically robust manner, the following table can however be used as a guide to inform the judgement made:

Likelihood	Probability
Highly Unlikely (1)	0% to 10% chance of occurring
Unlikely (2)	11% to 40% chance of occurring
Likely (3)	41% to 70% chance of occurring
Highly Likely (4)	71% to 100% chance of occurring

Principal risks are typically viewed from a broader perspective, providing an overview of the most significant risks that could impact the council's strategic objectives, while service risk registers focus on specific risks associated with individual services or functions. To ensure alignment between these two approaches, a reference to the Principal Risk Register will be included within each service risk register, fostering a comprehensive risk management framework that consistently monitors and addresses key risks at both the strategic and operational levels. In this context, the inherent risk score represents the level of risk in a situation before any controls are applied, whereas the residual risk score indicates the risk that remains after mitigation measures have been implemented.

## 7. How We Respond To Risks?

Once a risk has been identified, the Council need to decide and agree what it is going to do about it. The recognised approaches to controlling risks are described as the five key elements or 5 T's; Tolerate, Treat, Transfer, Terminate and Take the opportunity. These are described in more detail below. It is generally accepted that where a risk can be reduced through some form of treatment or mitigation in a cost-effective fashion then it is good to do so.

As a general principal once a risk has been identified, consideration needs to be given to the five T's and that the chosen approach is seen as being cost-effective so that the control of the risk is not disproportionate to the expected benefits.

### The five T's are:

- Treatment** By far the greatest number of risks will be addressed in this way by using appropriate control counter measures to constrain the risk or reduce the impact or likelihood to acceptable levels. Examples include strategy, process, people or systems' improvement.
- Transfer** For some risks the best response may be to transfer them and this might be done by transferring the risk to another party to bear or share the risk: e.g. through insurance, contracting or entering into a partnership. Risk can never be fully transferred.
- Tolerate** Where it is not possible to transfer or treat the risk, consideration needs to be given to how the consequences are managed should they occur. This may require having contingency plans in place, for example, Business Continuity Plans which create capacity to tolerate risk to a certain degree.

**Terminate** Some risks will only be treatable, or containable to acceptable levels by terminating the activity that created them. It should be noted that the option of termination of activities may be severely limited in local government when compared to the private sector; a number of activities are conducted in the local government sector because the associated risks are so great that there is no other way in which the output or outcome, which is required for the public benefit, can be achieved. This option can be particularly important in project management if it becomes clear that the projected cost/benefit relationship is in jeopardy.

**Take the Opportunity** This option is not an alternative to those above; rather it is an option which should be considered whenever tolerating, transferring or treating a risk. There are two aspects to this. The first is whether or not at the same time as mitigating threats; an opportunity arises to exploit positive impact. For example, if a large sum of capital funding is to be put at risk in a major project, are the relevant controls judged to be good enough to justify increasing the sum of money at stake to gain even greater advantages? The second is whether or not circumstances arise which, whilst not generating threats, offer positive opportunities. For example, a drop in the cost of goods or services frees up resources which can be re-deployed.

The council would ideally prefer not to accept a level of risk that is considered excessively high, as it could jeopardise the safety and well-being of our community, as well as our financial stability and operational effectiveness. Consequently, we are committed to implementing measures to reduce or manage these risks effectively. However, we must acknowledge that there are certain circumstances or unique situations wherein our ability to mitigate risks may be limited, leaving us with few options to address the inherent challenges involved.



## 8. Risk Reporting

Risk management is a dynamic process, and it is vital that Dashboards are kept up to date.

New risks will be identified, and some will be managed and removed. Risks need to be reviewed and reported upon to identify if risks are changing and their impact on the Council's objectives and to gain assurance that risk management is effective. The assessment of likelihood and impact levels for existing risks/opportunities will need to be updated to take into account the management actions undertaken, and contingency arrangements will need to be reviewed in response to changing internal and/or external events.

Regular Review of Service Risk Registers and the Principal Risk Register are to be undertaken considering the following points:

- Does the current risk score reflect the risk's likelihood and impact at this point in time?
- Is the control environment still sufficient?
- Are the identified controls effective?
- Are there any assurances that can be provided to validate the controls effectiveness levels?
- Is the information shared with officers and are they amending and refining their actions in light of any changes?

Each service area is required to maintain a Service Risk Register, which serves as a comprehensive tool for documenting and managing risks from a service perspective, facilitating the effective delivery of their service plans. Every three months, the Insurance and Risk Officer will ask Service and Senior Managers to review their respective risks. It is the responsibility of these managers to ensure that any necessary updates are completed on their Service Risk Registers by the specified deadline. This review process will also identify any risks that need to be escalated to the Principal Risk Register for oversight by the Executive Management Team (EMT). Additionally, urgent issues identified outside of the regular reporting cycles must be reported immediately by the service areas to the EMT for prompt attention.

The Executive Management Team (EMT) will conduct a review of the Principal Risk Register, determining whether to add or remove risks as necessary. The Principal Risk Register will be formally updated every six months. Additionally, there will be a quarterly review every three months, and any material issues that arise will be reported to EMT. This process ensures that actions regarding the principal risks are thoroughly evaluated. Following their review every six months, EMT will recommend the findings (report produced by Insurance and Risk Officer) to Audit Committee and the Cabinet before submitting them to the Council for approval. This approach establishes a focused and strategic method for risk mitigation while effectively capitalising on opportunities as they arise.

Historic versions of Service Risk Registers and Principal Risk Registers will be archived with every revision. If there is a business need to review these documents, they will be maintained in accordance with the council's Corporate Retention and Destruction Policy.

## 9. Document history

<b>Name of policy</b>	Risk Management Policy
<b>Purpose of policy</b>	Key stakeholders must understand their role or responsibilities within the risk management process, and how risk should be managed across the Council.
<b>Policy applies</b>	Corporately
<b>First issued</b>	2022
<b>Latest update</b>	2025
<b>Update overview</b>	<p>Reworded risk management statement</p> <p>Section 3 added for Risk Appetite</p> <p>Updated the wording to section 4 which referenced dashboards and anything considered out of date.</p> <p>Three lines of defence diagram updated.</p> <p>Added a diagram for Stating risks: causes, events and consequences within section 5</p> <p>Added a paragraph to section 6, this is identical to the one used in the Risk Appetite Statement.</p> <p>Added two paragraphs explaining current arrangements for risk reporting.</p> <p>All text has been updated to Verdana Pro and Verdana in line with the agreed corporate format.</p>

## 10. Definitions

Term	Definition
RAG Bands	Red, Amber or Green – Categories of Risk Ratings
EMT	Executive Management Team
PR	Principle Risks

New Forest District  
Council  
Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7PA  
 newforestdc  newforestgov  newforestcouncil  
[newforest.gov.uk](http://newforest.gov.uk)

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
<b>Operations</b>							
PR1	Cyber Security	Transformation Priority 4: Designing modern and innovative services	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	High	12	Malicious attack results in significant loss of sensitive data and/or significant disruption to Council operations	The Council continues to respond to the increasing cyber threat by completing a programme of work coordinated by its consulting Chief Information Security Officer, with a view to achieving external accreditation in due course.
PR2 248	Emergency Planning	Transformation Priority 4: Designing modern and innovative services	Strategic Director – Housing & Communities	Medium	6	An inadequate emergency planning response violates the Council's obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act and undermines both responsibilities and effective results.	The Council is collaborating with the Hampshire Resilience Forum to ensure effective preparedness for response, along with other partners at both national and local levels. Starting in April, we will establish a new relationship with Southampton as we transition away from Hampshire County Council (HCC), which will lead to the introduction of a new role. Currently, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is not functioning as intended, and we are engaging with MP's and external parties.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR3	Homelessness	People Priority 3: Meeting housing needs	Strategic Director – Housing & Communities	Medium	6	Inability to fulfil our legal obligations to the homeless (and/or to utilise our statutory authority to assist them) in a timely, effective, and efficient manner could negatively affect our financial position. This poses health and safety risks related to homelessness, as well as reputational risks, and could lead to another increase in homelessness.	To address the extraordinary demand, urgent efforts are being made to increase temporary accommodation options, while medium-term plans outlined in the Housing strategy are in progress. Funding has been increased.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR4	Hampshire County Council - Political Environment	All	Chief Executive	Medium	6	Hampshire County Council elections scheduled for May 2025 could have a substantial impact on the New Forest District Council by changing the political balance and shifting funding priorities. A change in leadership might result in decreased support for vital services such as transportation and education. Furthermore, differing political agendas could impede collaboration with the county, affecting community involvement and potentially leading to a breakdown in services for our residents. There is a possibility that these elections may be postponed until May 2026.	NFDC is part of a wider Hampshire elections planning group and have also set up internal elections planning should the May elections proceed. There may be other elections such as the Mayoral election in 26, and possible byelections as a consequence of a deferral of the HCC elections so resources will still be required. In terms of service changes, HCC will need to set a balanced budget and officers will engage with any service change proposals that impact New Forest residents.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR5	Business Continuity	All	Strategic Director – Housing & Communities		12	Ineffective business continuity response enables an event to seriously disrupt Council operations	The Council acknowledges a resource shortfall and will conduct a review of its business continuity arrangements in 2025. This review will focus on adapting to changes in working patterns and the digital environment, as well as emphasising operational resilience rather than responding to specific events. The Council is well positioned to respond effectively.
<b>Legal &amp; Regulatory</b>							
PR6 251	Health and Safety	People Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives	Chief Executive	Medium	8	A serious health and safety incident occurs	Implementation of the Council's H&S management system, including proactive monitoring arrangements and competent external advice overseen by the Corporate Health and Safety function.
PR7	Information Governance	All	Assistant Director Governance & Monitoring Officer	Medium	8	A serious data breach occurs and/or other significant instance of non-compliance with data legislation	Implementation of the Council's GDPR action plan continues overseen by the Council's Data Protection Officer and supported by the Information Governance team.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR8	Safeguarding	People Priority 1: Helping those in our community with the greatest need	Strategic Director – Housing & Communities	Medium	6	A safeguarding incident occurs which, through action or omission by the Council, might otherwise have been prevented	Under the supervision of the Hampshire Safeguarding Boards, the Community Safety Team remains engaged in safeguarding issues, supported by Designated Safeguarding Reporting Officers (DSROs). They implement effective processes and training programs in housing, ensuring a comprehensive approach to safeguarding measures.
PR9 252	Legal & Governance	All	Assistant Director Governance & Monitoring Officer	Medium	6	Legal & governance activity takes place which is not in the best interests of the Council and its stakeholders and/or is in breach of legislation	Legal and governance processes are enhancing. However, some residual risks remain. We make it a priority to seek appropriate specialist legal advice when necessary, staying aware of when it's needed.
PR10	Local Government Reform / Devolution	All	Chief Executive	High	12	The publication of the 'white paper'. We will work closely with our local authority partners to carry out specific actions and make sure our internal communications remain clear and effective.	It is anticipated that extensive programme management will take place, and the Government have outlined that they will be undertaking consultation and NFDC will be invited to respond. There is financial provision being proposed to support the work that will follow.



Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR11	Social Housing Regulatory Compliance	People Priority 3 – meeting Housing Needs	Strategic Director – Housing & Communities	Medium	6	Self-referral to Regulator of Social Housing. Non-compliant Inspection grading Reputational damage. Fine. H&S incident. Complaints and Disrepair claims.	Consumer Standard Gap Analysis and Action plan, Performance monitoring, Policy and Strategy reviews, reporting to EMT, Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet and Council. Tenant Engagement and Scrutiny
<b>Financial</b>							
PR12	Income and Financial Position	Transformation Priority 3: Being financially responsible	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	Medium	6	Income volatility / poor finance settlement / extreme event causing significant financial challenge	With the transformation program in progress and ongoing reviews of the MTFP, the council is fully committed to ensuring both immediate and future financial stability.

**Principal Risk Register 2024 - 2028 • January 2025**

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR13	Fraud	Transformation Priority 3: Being financially responsible	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	High	9	While the risk of internal fraud is low, the potential for external fraud remains a significant concern. This underscores the necessity for the Council to prioritise external fraud prevention strategies, ensuring that safeguards are in place to protect against outside threats and vulnerabilities. Lessons learned emphasise the importance of vigilance and proactive measures to mitigate these external risks effectively.	The Council's approach is set out in the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy supported by an action plan overseen by Internal Audit & the Executive Management Team

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR14	Procurement	Transformation Priority 3: Being financially responsible	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	Medium	6	Procurement activity takes place which is not in the best interests of the Council and its stakeholders and/or is in breach of legislation	Central procurement processes have become more agile and resilient, and contract oversight is enhancing. However, some residual risk remains with the Services. It is essential to initiate contract management and tender processes well in advance.
<b>Major Projects</b>							
PR15 255	Hardley Depot	Place Priority 1: Shaping our place now and for future generations	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	Medium	6	The new depot has not been completed within the required timeframe and is not operationally available.	The short-term financial exposure is increasing as the programme progresses.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR16	Waste Strategy Implementation	Place Priority 3: Caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods and open spaces in a modern and responsive way	Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability	Medium	8	The ineffective transition from black plastic bags to waste bins can lead to significant operational impacts, including increased littering and improper bin usage, which may drive up disposal costs and create health hazards. Additionally, these issues can lead to potential legal repercussions and loss of funding. The reputational risks associated with a failed transition may strain community trust in the Council and heighten operational challenges.	An effective communication strategy is essential for informing the community and facilitating the successful implementation of the new waste management system. It is important for members to engage more broadly with the community regarding this significant service change.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR17	Transformation Programme	Transformation Priority 4: Designing modern and innovative services	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	Medium	8	Effective development and delivery of our digital and people strategies is crucial for achieving our Corporate Plan goals. Failure to implement these initiatives properly may create a disconnect between our strategic objectives and daily operations, hindering efficiency and overall performance. Alignment among stakeholders is essential to prevent misalignment.	Programme governance embedded and regular Cllr oversight through the Resources and Transformation O&S panel. Need to stay mindful of LGR context and take proportionate action based on this medium-term outlook.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
PR18	Planning and regulatory system upgrade	Transformation Priority 4: Designing modern and innovative	Strategic Director Corporate Resources & Transformation Section 151 Officer	Medium	8	The planning system may face challenges and potential failures without effective management. This underscores the importance of utilising dependable planning software to promote efficient processes and successful project outcomes, which could also impact the transformation program and regulatory services.	Terms agreed upon for the regulatory planning system and contractual assistance regarding the present situation.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
Reputation							
PR19  259	Climate and Ecological Emergency	Place Priority 2: Protecting our climate, coast, and natural world	Strategic Director of Place, Operations and Sustainability	Medium	6	The Council is making efforts to address climate change-related challenges, such as promoting biodiversity, improving waste management, and implementing sustainable development practices, but there is still more work to be done to fully meet the demands of our unique environment and community.	Implementation of the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan continues.

Ref	Risk Title	Corporate Plan Theme	Risk Owner	Current Risk Rating	Risk Score	Risk Event	Overview and Mitigation
<b>People</b>							
PR20	Working practices	Transformation Priority 2: Being an employer of choice		High	12	With a large in-house workforce providing such a variety of diverse services, application of local working practices in comparison to standard terms and conditions could result in inconsistencies across the workforce	A thorough staff consultation has been undertaken recently in Waste Services to advise of proposed terms and conditions changes in readiness for the new waste service. A recent review of Essential User Allowances has also recently been undertaken and is nearing conclusion.



**Note:**

Categories

Must be assigned to either:

- Financial
- Legal & Regulatory
- Major Projects
- Operations
- People
- Reputation

Theme:

People Priorities	Code
Priority 1: Helping those in our community with the greatest need	PE1
Priority 2: Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives	PE2
Priority 3: Meeting housing needs	PE3
Place Priorities	
Priority 1: Shaping our place now and for future generation	PL1
Priority 2: Protecting our climate, coast, and natural world	PL2
Priority 3: Caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods, and open spaces in a modern & responsive way	PL3
Prosperity Priorities Code	
Priority 1: Maximising the benefits of inclusive economic growth and investment	PR1
Priority 2: Supporting our high-quality business base and	PR2

Principal Risk Register 2024 - 2028 • January 2025

economic centres to thrive and grow	
Priority 3: Championing skills and access to job opportunities	PR3
<b>Transformation Priorities</b>	
Putting our customers at the heart	PT1
Being an employer of choice	PT2
Being financially responsible	PT3
Designing modern and innovative services	PT4

Risk owner

Must be assigned to either:

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director
- Statutory Officer

Current Risk Rating / Risk Score

Risk Score	Risk Level
9-16	High Risk
4-8	Medium Risk
1-4	Low Risk