

12 SEPTEMBER 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLACE AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 12 September 2024

* Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine (Chairman)
Cllr Alvin Reid (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Peter Armstrong
* Allan Glass
* Matthew Hartmann

Councillors:

* Stephanie Osborne
* Adam Parker
Malcolm Wade

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Geoffrey Blunden
Derek Tipp

Councillors:

Janet Richards

Officers Attending:

James Carpenter, Dean Brunton, Tim Davis, Tim Guymer, Roxanne King, Chris Noble, Karyn Punchard, Andy Rogers and James Smith.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Reid and M Wade.

10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

13 WASTE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel received a detailed appraisal and updates on all elements of the programme for the proposed new refuse, recycling, and food waste collection service, together with confirmed dates for the roll out in three phases during 2025/26.

Some members reported residents' concerns regarding information on arrangements for disabled people, who may be unable to move wheelie bins, as well as queries over narrow roads and inaccessible areas for Council vehicles. Officers gave assurances that an Assisted Collections Policy addressing such issues had been in place for some years, and this would be carried forward under the new arrangements. The Policy was available on the Council's website, or residents could contact the Council via telephone to discuss these issues. It was suggested that the New Forest Disability Forum be informed of the new arrangements.

Furthermore, teams were visiting locations to undertake comprehensive assessments to resolve these issues and devise bespoke arrangements where necessary. Members asked to be kept informed of these visits. It was anticipated that only a small minority of areas would be unsuitable for wheelie bins. A communication plan was also being developed with a view to providing constant and effective information to residents, explaining how the new system would work, and giving ongoing updates on recycling and collections arrangements.

In answer to a question, officers reported that the anaerobic digester to serve the New Forest area would be sited outside of the District, in Dorset or Hampshire, possibly Basingstoke.

Monitoring recycling rates to measure improvement under the new arrangements would likely take 18-24 months after inception.

In answer to a question, it was reported that some DEFRA transitional funding had now been received for containers and vehicles, though transition costs, as well as ongoing new burden revenue funding, were still awaited.

RESOLVED:

That is be a recommendation to the Cabinet:

- (i) That the waste programme timeline attached at Appendix A be approved.
- (ii) That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability and the Waste Management Programme Board, to keep the roadmap at Appendix B under review and agree any minor variations to the waste programme.

14 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK & THE USE OF STRATEGIC CIL

The Panel received an update on work to develop a strategy for the expenditure of the strategic element of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

It was noted that new development needed to be supported by physical, social, and green infrastructure contributions, collected from developers via both S106 agreements and CIL. These were required in order to make new developments acceptable in planning terms, providing mitigation that served to minimise the impacts on the local community and infrastructure.

The report proposed another round of local infrastructure funding bids (with the arrangements being very similar to last year's process) as well as allocating monies to 5 strategic projects and monies specifically for cultural funds.

RESOLVED:

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet that:

- (a) The revised CIL Expenditure Framework and communication strategy attached at Appendix 2 and 3 be adopted.
- (b) The allocations and approach to strategic element of CIL be approved.
- (c) The five identified projects be progressed noting that formal decision making in respect of projects as they progress will be in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations

15 PROPOSED CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Panel received a report setting out and summarising the main proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other planning reforms, and how they could impact New Forest District Council.

The report also contained, as an appendix, the draft response to consultation on changes to the NPPF which will be finalised under delegated authority by the Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder. The Panel noted an updated version of this appendix modifying the proposed response, which was circulated to the Panel following a meeting of the Local Plan Working Group on 9 September.

In answer to a query, officers explained that the response highlighted the constraints on a District Council having a significant proportion of its area within a National Park and how this affected its ability to meet housing need.

Officers reported that some external specialists may be used to assist the Council in the preparation of the evidence base as part of the Local Plan review process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That it be a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy that the proposed consultation response to the National Planning Policy Framework, together with the further comments made by the Local Plan Member Working Group, be agreed.
- (b) That the Panel support the intention of the Portfolio Holder to write to the Secretary of State in relation to infrastructure funding, for key statutory consultees to be resourced effectively.

16 NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS – APPROACH, GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

The Panel received a paper setting out how the Council should deal with Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) as defined under the Planning Act 2008 and other legislation, including the proposed approach, governance and resourcing for the process, together with the use of Planning Performance Agreements.

NSIPs were large scale projects which could have a significant impact on the District so it was important for the host authority to have sufficient resources to respond appropriately and in a timely way. The proposed approach was for the Council to seek full cost recovery for its involvement in the NSIP process.

In answer to a question on the extent of influence of the host authority on the outcome of NSIP applications, it was explained that there had been 230 such projects nationally and local authorities had been actively engaged in all of them. Districts would work in tandem with the NPA and HCC, and local member input would add real value to the process. NFDC could not dictate the overall programme, but it would engage where it was permitted to do so within the timescale available.

It was noted that no local NSIP projects had arisen since the Navitus Bay application in 2015, but officers were aware of two imminent NSIP projects, (the development of land between Marchwood and Dibden relating to the Port of Southampton, with the second being the Solent CO2 Pipeline). The NSIP arrangements would ensure the proper structure was in place to deal with these proposals.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 in relation to the process by which Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects were determined be noted and it be agreed that the Council should be involved in future projects in its role as a host authority.
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place Operations and Sustainability to manage the District Council's involvement in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy and, depending on the scale and nature of the project, the Leader of the Council as appropriate; and
- (c) That Planning Performance Agreements be sought from promoters and applicants for each project at the earliest stage to cover the District Council's costs involved in accordance with the key principles set out in paragraph 37 of the report.

17 RESPONSE TO EXXON MOBIL'S NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON ITS SOLENT CO2 PIPELINE PROJECT

The Panel received a summary of the consultation options relating to Exxon Mobil's planned project to transport carbon dioxide from a location in the Fawley area through a new underground pipeline to proposed storage at an aquifer under the seabed off the coast of Bournemouth, together with a proposed NFDC response.

It was noted that if this scheme progressed, the pipeline element would likely qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The consultation currently underway was non-statutory consultation and did not form part of the NSIP process. The deadline for the consultation had been extended from 12 to 30 September 2024.

Members commented that Fawley Parish Council had asked for a discussion with Exxon on the topic, at which Exxon explained their intentions.

Members expressed concern at the potential environmental implications for the local area and felt there were less harmful options. Members sought clarity and greater transparency on the project. Officers commented that more information would follow once the project formally started and officers would work to minimise the impacts as it went forward. Members sought assurances that the public and the full Council be made aware of the implications.

Members also queried whether this was the correct method of storing carbon and emphasised the importance of protecting the Forest. Some members had received information from residents on the issue and offered to share it with officers. Officers indicated that there had been other similar projects in different parts of the country, and it was hoped to gain learning from these, however the merits of the project were not the basis of this consultation:-

Another member felt that if agreed, the project would lead to significant increases in emissions (worse than stated), and that there did not appear to be any benefits to the scheme. Reference was made to a paper produced by a Mr Simon King, sustainability consultant, which had been circulated by email to Panel members. Mr King had offered to speak to the Panel on the proposal. Residents' concerns were also reported regarding compensation and limited scope for feedback in Exxon's online consultation.

It was confirmed Members were also able to make representations as individuals during the consultation.

Officers reiterated that this was not even the start of the process and undertook to work through the points raised by members. The process would enable these matters to be explored over the course of the next few months, including mitigation, compensation and public consultation, should the project progress to a formal NSIP project.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That it be a recommendation to Portfolio Holder that the proposed response be agreed as set out in Appendix 1 to this report and that the Council be kept informed.
- (b) That engagement with the NSIP process concerning this scheme, recognising the need for it to be appropriately resourced, be endorsed.

18 CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ANNUAL UPDATE 2023/24

This Panel received an update on progress towards achieving the aims of the Climate Change and Nature Emergency declaration. Updates within this report were aligned to the four adopted programmes of activity – Carbon Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Nature Recovery and Programme Management and covered activities undertaken between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.

It was noted that the new NFDC Corporate Plan 2024-28 reinforced the Council's commitment to the issues of climate change and sustainability. The activities reported contributed towards a number of corporate plan priorities, however the report itself was most closely aligned with Place Priority 2 – Protecting our climate,

coast and natural world. The recommendations supported key principles of the Council's Future New Forest Transformation Programme and were aligned to the UK Government's legislative target to achieve net zero CO₂e emissions by 2050.

In answer to a question, it was explained that the transport emissions levels quoted included vehicles passing through the District as well as from residents and businesses from within the District. Vehicle emissions had improved slightly but still remained the largest source of emissions in the District.

It was explained that the report would come back to the Panel on an annual basis, reviewed through the Task and Finish Group using SMART objectives.

In response to a query, it was explained that the timescale for completion of the Strategy was dependent on the project scope. Officers reported that good progress was being made on the action plan and work would be undertaken with the Task and Finish Group to ensure accountability and transparency. Actions would be monitored via internal progress reports. The website content and external reporting would be enhanced.

A member referred to funding availability for certain projects including Invest to Save Projects, and sought examples. In response it was explained some of these were already underway, for example insulation measures on Council buildings, renewable energy and digital service improvements, which had good payback periods.

It was acknowledged that the Council could work more closely with the NPA and other partners on this project where appropriate.

Officers undertook to report back to a member on replacement of trees at Fawley Fields.

RESOLVED:

That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet:

- (a) That the activities undertaken and efforts made by NFDC and its partners between 1 January 2023 and 31st March 2024 in response to the declared Climate Change and Nature Emergency, be noted.
- (b) That it be noted that as local leaders of place, NFDC, through its corporate plan, transformation programme and ongoing approaches to service delivery, has made a clear commitment to the climate and nature emergency agenda, recognising UK Government's legally binding net zero targets.
- (c) That it supports ongoing delivery of the approved Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan (as set out in Appendix 2 to the report), and by continuing to work with partners and the public, the Council would continue to play a key role.
- (d) That the Council continues to support the development of the longer-term Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, supported by the Member Climate Change and Nature Emergency Task and Finish Group.

19 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATES

Environment and Sustainability Portfolio

The Panel had received two detailed reports on the Waste Programme Update and the Climate Change & Nature Emergency Annual update the portfolio holder thanked the officers involved for their excellent work in producing these reports.

The next phase of annual maintenance works had commenced at Milford on Sea to improve protection to a 75m section the seawall, with the works expected to be completed by the end of October. The project included the placing of 1,100 tons of rock to construct a rock revetment, timber groyne repairs and importing of 2,500 tons of shingle to add to the beach.

He also reminded the Panel that Cabinet approved the Christchurch Bay and Harbour Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy last week. There was also ongoing development of a sister strategy covering the Hurst Spit to Lymington section of our coast, which was entering its next phase of public engagement.

The Panel noted there would also be engagement sessions during November for the public and other stakeholders to find out more, being held in Lymington and Milford-on-Sea. A drop - in event was being arranged at ATC for members, officers, Town & Parish Councils on 27 November.

Works were ongoing to complete improvements to 4 beach shelters along the coastal frontage in Milford and Barton-on-Sea. These works had been funded from the UK Prosperity Fund. Further works were to be carried out on 3 other shelters. Once complete, these shelters would have had a much-needed facelift and would provide a more pleasant and more accessible facility for visitors to the New Forest coastline.

Economy and Planning Portfolio

It was reported that the Rural Prosperity fund available to local businesses had now all been allocated, enabling a number of good small businesses to have 50% funding for equipment or premises improvements which would ensure they could thrive and take on extra staff. It was understood there was to be some Communication release about this once the projects were underway.

This year's Brilliance in Business Awards was underway, with a Launch Event taking place on 29 August at the Balmer Lawn Hotel. NFDC were sponsoring the Best Micro-Business section again this year. Any business could put themselves forward or be proposed by someone else. Members were encouraged to spread the word among the local business community. The Portfolio holder gave details of the relevant website: [New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards 2024 | New Forest Business Partnership \(nfbp.org.uk\)](https://www.nfbp.org.uk). Entries were due by the end of September. The organisation did a lot to help local business thanks to its very dedicated chairman, Matthew Lawson.

The NFDC Planning service had received a large number of proposals from the new Government covering a wide range of planning aspects.

The Government consultation on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework ends on 24 September and is open to anyone, and members

were encouraged to raise awareness and give a personal response if they wished to wish to. He gave details of the weblink as follows [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system)

The Council's own Local Plan preparation was continuing with a call for development sites to go out in the next few weeks. Meanwhile a number of studies had been commissioned to include requirements for housing, open space, pitches, play facilities, travelling community, etc. In early Spring of 2025 NFDC would publish a draft Plan for consultation. When the feedback from this had been examined an updated draft Plan would be published towards the end of 2025 for further consultation. A Member Working Group had been set up and had its first meeting on Monday 9 September.

20 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the following dates be agreed for meetings of the Panel in 2025/26:
(Thursdays at 6pm):

2025

19 June

11 September

2026

15 January

12 March

CHAIRMAN