

**17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 17 September 2025

- \* Cllr Steve Clarke (Chairman)
- \* Cllr Kate Crisell (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

- \* John Adams
- \* Hilary Brand
- \* Sean Cullen
- \* Richard Frampton
- \* Patrick Mballa

**Councillors:**

- \* Neville Penman
- \* Neil Tungate

\*Present

**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Steve Davies

**Councillors:**

Dan Poole

**Also In Attendance:**

Ross Archibald, Adam Freeman, Darren Jones, Anthony Richards, Melvyn Otley (Co-Optee) and Matt Wickham.

**Officers Attending:**

David Brown, Brian Byrne, Pawel Duchnowski, Kirsty Farmer, Rachel Higgins, Richard Knott, Chris Pope, Ben Stockley, Paul Thomas, Sophie Tuffin, Saqib Yasin, Paul Whittles and Lee Ellis

**Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**19 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

**20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**22 FREEDOM LEISURE/NFDC PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Contract Relationship Officer presented an overview of the Freedom Leisure/ NFDC Annual Performance Report.

Following the presentation a Panel member asked if the capital investment objectives and plans were front ended and in response, it was confirmed that the decarbonisation programme would be the largest investment over a 12-month period.

A question was raised by a member regarding staff costs, and it was acknowledged that whilst employee costs had risen, that the partnership was also a lower payer and therefore needed to provide employees with additional skills. Therefore, in future roles would be multiskilled to enable employees to work across different departments, with an example provided of those working at the reception, café and hub being able to work across all those areas.

A Panel member felt that the aesthetics of the marketing of Freedom Leisure was masculine looking and this could be discouraging to women and young people joining. In response, it was agreed that it could potentially be off putting, although the majority of employees were female and this hadn't been raised.

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the New Forest Partnership Annual Performance Report.

**23 MYTIME ACTIVE/NFDC PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

An overview was provided by the Contract Relationship Officer on the MyTime Active/NFDC Partnership Annual Performance.

Following the presentation, a Panel member asked if there was a deficit in the availability of days for playing golf. In response, it was confirmed that although the aim was for 365 days of golf, this wasn't feasible. Therefore, the partnership had looked to diversify its offering with the installation of an indoor simulator and driving range to benefit members and to showcase the leisure products. It was also confirmed that there were currently 525 members with a target of 700 members. Officers were actively looking at how to attract the 'nomadic' golfer to the course.

A Panel member sought details of the projects being undertaken and it was confirmed that the old drainage channels and soakaways were being repaired or renewed. It was also confirmed that the fairways were being treated with vertical draining and shockwave machines, alongside farming techniques to ascertain how the ground could be fractured.

A member asked what catering facilities were available and what marketing was being undertaken to attract families to the facility. It was confirmed that there was a fully purposed kitchen which could cater for up to 200 people for weddings and conferences. In addition, there was an increased use of social media and outreach as part of ongoing marketing.

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the New Forest Partnership with MYTIME Active Annual Performance Report.

**24 CORPORATE PLAN: KEY PERFORMANCE DATA (QUARTER 1)**

The Performance and Insight Manager provided an overview of the Corporate Plan Key Performance Data (Quarter 1).

A Panel Member requested an update on the CCTV rollout and it was confirmed that in the previous quarter an additional fourteen cameras had been installed across the network. October would see the electrification of the cameras at Tesco in Brockenhurst and locations in Totton. Discussion had been undertaken with Lyndhurst Parish Council to agree locations for cameras. The expansion of the programme was expected to be completed by the end of October 2025. It was also highlighted that the existing analogue infrastructure would be replaced in the next phase of the programme. All Parish and Town Councils were financially contributing to the CCTV programme.

A question was raised regarding KPI 3 (Number of families with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over six weeks) and the length of time the six families in bed and breakfast accommodation would be there for. In response, it was agreed that a response would be provided directly to the member.

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel considered and reviewed the Q1 2025-2026 dashboard.

**25 STIGMATISATION IN SOCIAL HOUSING (PRESENTATION)**

The Tenancy Involvement Group Co-optee provided a presentation on Stigmatisation in Social Housing.

A Panel member asked if levels of stigma had changed. In response, it was hoped that change was happening although an example was provided of a neighbouring authority undertaking a project on stigma which included talking to tenants, but nothing changed. If an authority engaged with its tenants, in a positive and initiative way, there should be a subsequent drop in complaints. It was felt that there was no stigma to renting in the private sector. Communication was key and tenants should be treated the same as if you were making a purchase from a shop.

It was confirmed that the initiative to remove the stigma in social housing was being rolled out across the Council, which would impact both Councillors and staff. Work would also be undertaken with the Tenant Involvement Group. There would be a number of measures used such as the tenant satisfaction data, complaints data, and service information alongside gathering data from residents as it was necessary to gather views from a variety of sources.

Members felt that it was important to listen to the voices of New Forest tenants and that the presentation had provided food for thought and an opportunity for reflection.

**RESOLVED**

That the presentation was noted.

**26 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION ACT (2023) PROGRESS REPORT NUMBER 4 (NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY STANDARD)**

The Assistant Director – Housing provided an overview on the Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) Progress Report Number 4 (Neighbourhood and Community Standard).

A Panel member asked how tenant data on diverse needs was collected and it was confirmed that an external company was undertaking a 12 month project to provide the data. Since April 2023, all data was collected from new via the tenant. Historic data was required and to make sure that the current data was correct.

A question was asked regarding the governance in place for the housing service, and in response, it was confirmed that there is robust governance framework operating to ensure good performance and compliance, which culminates with overall tenant satisfaction of 81%, and was one of the best in the country.

**RESOLVED**

That the report was noted.

**27 GREENER HOUSING STRATEGY ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing provided an overview on the Greener Housing Strategy Annual Review.

Members were pleased with the progress to date, although they felt that central government had moved the goalposts. Concern was raised regarding the cost to tenants and that the Council needed to be careful not to penalise them. In response, it was confirmed that the Council was looking at funding opportunities to be able to provide more PV panels on the roofs of its properties, although not every tenant would be able to have panels on their roof or be positively impacted by it.

**RESOLVED**

That Panel members noted the progress made from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 to deliver the priorities and actions in the Greener Housing Strategy 2022-32.

**28 DRAFT HOUSING LANDLORD TENANCY POLICY AND MUTUAL EXCHANGE POLICY**

The Service Manager – Housing Resident Services provided an overview on the draft Housing and Landlord Tenancy Policy and Mutual Exchange Policy.

It was confirmed that the policies had been presented to the tenants' involvement group and that the change from fixed term to lifetime tenancies was welcomed.

A Panel member was concerned that the opportunity for under occupancy would still exist and questioned whether there was a way to eliminate the issue. In response, it was confirmed that the Council had never ended a tenancy to under or over occupation due to the lack of available housing stock to rehouse tenants. Future data collection would inform the Council of under or over occupation and what schemes or incentives should be set up.

It was raised by a Panel member that neighbouring councils didn't have fixed term tenancy policies and questioned whether the draft was to align with those councils as part of local government reorganisation. It was confirmed that the primary driver for the policy was not due to local government reorganisation, but that it was considered to make it easier to combine policies.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Panel:

1. Supported the draft Housing Landlord Tenancy policy, including the end of fixed term tenancies and support the policy proceeding to Cabinet.
2. Considered the draft Housing Landlord Mutual Exchange policy and supported the approval by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness.

### **29 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS TO EMPTY HOMES AND HOMES UNDERGOING MUTUAL EXCHANGE POLICY FOR HOUSING (LANDLORD SERVICES) PERIODIC REVIEW.**

The Service Manager – Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing provided and overview on the Maintenance and Repairs to Empty Homes and Homes Undergoing Mutual Exchange Policy for Housing (Landlord Services) Periodic Review.

A Panel member asked whether there was a policy on flooring, due to the expensive for a tenant to provide. It was confirmed that the condition of all vacant properties was assessed and anything considered to be of a good standard would be left for the incoming resident, whilst being mindful that some residents would not wish to keep the carpets. The council was working with tenants to get the right service level for individual customers. The council was not in a position to be able to afford the cost of replacing flooring in every newly vacant property.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Panel supported a revised Maintenance and Repairs to Empty Homes and Homes undergoing Mutual Exchange Policy.

### **30 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE (PRESENTATION)**

The Service Manager - Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts provided a presentation on homelessness.

The Chairman thanked the Homelessness team for their work on preventing homelessness.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the presentation.

### **31 PROGRESS OF THE ANNUAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE SAFER NEW FOREST PARTNERSHIP (PRESENTATION)**

The Service Manager Community Safety and Support provided a presentation on the progress of the annual strategic priorities of the Safer New Forest Partnership.

The Chairman thanked the Service Manager for the comprehensive report.

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the presentation.

**32 HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTION PLAN**

The Strategic Director - Housing and Communities provided an overview on the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

It was confirmed that the current Health and Wellbeing Action Plan covered the period 2022 – 2025 and was aligned with the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy. There would not be a revised New Forest plan after 2025 due to LGR priorities, however many of the aims remained relevant in the work going forward, such as the increase in physical activity, improve mental health and working in partnership. Cardiovascular disease and childhood obesity priorities would also be included with a focus on those in most need.

**RESOLVED**

That the Housing and Communities Panel considered the progress and updates to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and agreed the refreshing of the priorities.

**33 AIR QUALITY STRATEGY**

The Environmental Protection Team Manager provided an overview on the Air Quality Strategy.

**RESOLVED**

That Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel supported the process for Council to consider the Air Quality Strategy for the New Forest District Council, with the recommendation of adoption.

**34 FOOD SAFETY REVIEW PLAN**

The Food and Safety Team Manager provided an overview on the Food Safety Review Plan.

A Panel member felt that good progress had been made and that the better performing businesses were effectively self-inspecting due to being low risk operators. It was confirmed that ninety six percent of businesses already scored a three, four or five food hygiene rating and it would be good to raise the standard further across the district. Some businesses, often due to financial pressures, end up with a poor rating. The council had performed well with its number of inspections and was similar to other local authority areas in the UK.

**RESOLVED**

That the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the performance of the Food and Safety Team in delivering food controls over the past year and supported the work plan for the forthcoming year.

**35 FUTURE MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED**

That the following dates for future meetings of the Panel in the 2026/27 municipal year be agreed:

(Wednesdays at 6.00pm)

**2026**

17 June

16 September

**2027**

20 January

17 March

**36 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE**

The Panel received updates from the Portfolio Holders.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing provided an update and confirmed that the Council continued to work with Southern Water on resilience issues on small, bottled water storage located across the district which would provide further resilience. In addition, a Southern Water Members Briefing would be held in the coming months.

The Portfolio Holder announced that the Council was reviewing its business continuity plans to ensure that critical activities would continue to be delivered during an incident, that relevant, refresher training was being provided for all service managers.

The Public Spaces Protection Orders consultation had received over 800 responses, the results of which would be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

The New Forest Community Lottery had been launched on 9 September 2025. Twenty-four organisations had joined the scheme and following its positive feedback more organisations were expected to also join. A subscription to Freedom Leisure was a main prize which directly linked to and supported healthy lifestyles.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness commended the Officers for the preparation undertaken for the meetings of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and thanked Melyvn Utley (Co-optee) for his contribution.

Along with Councillors Miller and Woods, the Portfolio Holder had visited the Cala Homes development at Fordingbridge and reported that the properties were of a high standard, on a mixed development which included properties for social rent, shared ownership and private purchase. The Portfolio Holder would undertake a visit to Vivid Homes, Ashurst which also included shared ownership properties.

The developers of the former Hythe Hospital site had been recognised by the National House Building Council for their contribution to the quality and style of the development, which provided twenty-two units for social rent.

**37 WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be approved.

CHAIRMAN