

18 MARCH 2026

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, 18 March 2026

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

Councillors:

John Adams
* Hilary Brand
Sean Cullen
Richard Frampton

Councillors:

John Haywood
* Patrick Mballa
* Neil Tungate

*Present

In attendance:

Substitute:

Allan Glass

Councillors:

Steve Davies
Neville Penman

Councillors:

Dan Poole

Also In Attendance:

Melvyn Utley (Housing Co-Optee)

Officers Attending:

Emily Berry, David Brown, Brian Byrne, Kirsty Farmer, Richard Knott, Peter Matthew, Chris Pope, Lucy Spence, Amanda Wilson, Saqib Yasin and Lee Ellis

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Adams, Crisell, Cullen, Frampton and Haywood. Cllr Glass was in attendance as a nominated substitute for Cllr Adams.

52 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

54 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

55 CORPORATE PLAN: KEY PERFORMANCE DATA FOR QUARTER 3 2025-2026

An overview was provided by the Performance and Insight Manager and the Panel considered the Corporate Plan Key Performance Data for Quarter 3 covering the period October to December 2025.

A Panel member asked why KPI No. 25 – Number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people, had been red for the previous two quarters and what action would be undertaken to return KPI No. 25 to green. It was confirmed that although the KPI was not under the remit of the Panel, that KPI No. 25 was a cumulative measure which incremented over the year. Although performance had improved, the incrementing nature of this measure would likely mean the year-end position would be over target, fly-tipping continued to be monitored closely with any incidences of fly-tipping being cleared as soon as possible. Mitigating actions had resulted in a decrease of fly tipping at bring-sites. More detailed service insight was provided at the Place and Sustainability Panel in January, where this KPI was regularly reviewed.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered and reviewed the Q3 2025/2026 dashboard.

56 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER(S) REVIEW & EXTENSION

An overview was provided by the Service Manager – Community Safety and Support on the Public Space Protection Order(s) Review and Extension.

The Service Manager – Community Safety and Support confirmed that the approach to signage would change throughout the lifetime of the Orders. Initially, the focus on signage was at car parks and it was acknowledged that not everyone arrived at the New Forest via a car park. In future, those who used the car parks would see an increase in signage, which would be undertaken in conjunction with Forestry England. Additional officers would be accredited to enforce the Orders, along with the Forestry England Parking Team who would receive relevant training and have delegated authority to educate the public and be able to enforce the Orders. In addition, small, digital powered matrix signs would also be used to convey messages, which would provide flexibility to be moved around the district, as required. The New Forest Commoners Defence Association would also be working with the Council to promote signage.

RESOLVED:

The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HCOSP) noted the contents of the report and consultation document and:

1. Acknowledged the outcomes of the public and key stakeholder consultation on the proposed extension of the PSPOs addressing restrictions on lighting fires and using BBQs in the open Forest, as well as feeding and petting Forest animals;
2. Recognised the findings of the two consultations, and the Panel supported Option A:

- a) the extension of the PSPOs in their current form, effective from 1st July 2026;
- 3. Supported that the report be submitted and onward reviewed by Cabinet to seek approval to extend the PSPOs for a 3-year period;
- 4. On the extension of the PSPOs, supported actions to improve public awareness of the orders; and
- 5. Supported the Service Manager for Community Safety & Support being authorised by Cabinet to finalise the arrangements with Partners for enforcement, training and signage.

57 SAFER NEW FOREST STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2025

An overview was provided by the Service Manager – Community Safety and Support on the Safer New Forest Strategic Assessment 2025.

The Service Manager – Community Safety and Support, in response to a question, confirmed that a victim would incur many incidences of domestic abuse before they felt safe and confident to be able to report those incidences. Therefore, the Partnership needed to ensure that there would be sufficient, resilient staff, services and access to information for victims, at a time of the victims choosing. The strategy would provide increased training for the Council's front-line staff and champions across all the Council's services, as well as the Domestic Abuse Forum and the wider partnership agencies.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- 1. Reviewed the data and findings within the annual strategic assessment; and
- 2. Noted the priorities, as set by strategic partners of the Safer New Forest Strategy and Delivery Group.

58 TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - ANNUAL UPDATE 2026

The Tenant Engagement Manager provided an overview on the Tenant Engagement Strategy – Annual Update 2026.

The Housing Co-optee thanked the Tenant Engagement Manager and their team for the excellent service that they provided to the Tenant Involvement Group and the wider tenant community, which was reflected in the tenant satisfaction measures. It was confirmed that tenant voices were heard and stronger relationships were being developed with the community, although reaching the wider community was more difficult. The Council was working on an ongoing project to further increase communication between the Council and tenants. The inclusion of a Housing Co-optee was also evidence of the success of the Tenant Engagement Strategy.

A Panel member asked whether other Councils had Housing Co-Optees as part of its scrutiny panels and engagement. It was confirmed that there was a mixed approach, with some organisations having tenant representatives. The Council felt that it was at the forefront of tenant involvement, with tenants felt that they were listened to and the Council would continue on a consistent, improvement journey.

RESOLVED:

The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewed and noted the progress made on delivering the commitments within the tenant engagement strategy.

59 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION ACT (2023) PROGRESS REPORT NUMBER 6 (COMPETENCE AND CONDUCT REQUIREMENTS)

An overview was provided by the Housing Policy and Projects Officer on the Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) Progress Report Number 6 (Competence and Conduct Requirements).

The Chairman congratulated those who had undertaken or were in the process of undertaking the mandatory qualification requirements.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

1. Considered the Housing Landlord’s preparation for compliance in meeting the competence and conduct requirements and made any further recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness;
2. Noted the significance that had been given to ensure the tenants of NFDC continued to receive a professional service from competent officers; and
3. Receive a further report on the readiness for the Competence and Conduct requirements of the Consumer Standards, including final versions of the documents required to fulfil the requirements as stated in the report, at its September 2026 meeting.

60 RIGHT TO BUY REPORT

The Housing Business Development Team Leader provided an overview on the Right to Buy Report.

The Panel noted that in the 2024/25 financial year, the Council had received ninety-six applications under the Right to Buy legislation prior to changes which meant less favourable terms for applicants. This had decreased to date in the 2025/26 financial year to ten applications and it anticipated that this would be the future trend.

RESOLVED:

The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

1. Reviewed the new Right to Buy Policy; and
2. Supported its approval by the Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder.

61 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Service Manager – Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts provided an overview on the Homelessness Update.

An overview was provided on reasons behind why the official rough sleeper figures differed from the on-street findings. This was due to the snapshot methodology of

rough sleeper figures. The public were encouraged to continue to report rough sleeping to the Council.

The Chairman asked whether the Renters Rights Act would increase case complexity. It was confirmed by the Service Manager – Housing Options and Tenancy Accounts, that the number of landlords in the private sector could reduce and that landlord working processes would need to be amended due to the Act.

A Panel member asked if there would be a future issue with the requirement for landlords to provide a minimum energy performance certificate rating of C. In response, it was confirmed that this could be an issue for landlords who had older properties or for those who faced limitations regarding what they could do to raise the EPC rating to a C. It was confirmed that the Council had positive engagement with landlords, and that wanted to improve and raise the standards of their properties. It was noted that funding was available for improvements through the Warm Homes initiative.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the updated position of homelessness within the district.

62 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE

The Panel received updates from the Portfolio Holders.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness announced that on 7 April 2026, he and other local members, would attend the opening of a new development at the lower end of Salisbury Road, Totton. This would provide twelve social rent flats and eight temporary accommodation maisonettes. The development was adjacent to the shops and fronted the New Forest District Council owned car park. The area was also served by a regular bus service and nearby train station which would make those new homes desirable.

Alongside the “Yellow Door” scheme in Totton, the Council had completed seventy-seven affordable homes in 2025/26. This made a total of 452 new affordable housing properties being provided over the past eight years. A further 196 Section 106 homes were in contract or under construction at New Milton, Everton, Bransgore/Sopley and Fordingbridge. In Totton, the Council had a contract with Bloor Homes to purchase and deliver fifty-seven Section 106 affordable homes at the top end of Salisbury Road. This would bring the total number of new affordable homes to 648 either delivered or in the pipeline.

The Housing target was stretched in 2018 to 600 new homes by 2026, although the Council hadn't foreseen the supply chain shocks of the pandemic and other external factors. However, the target had still been pretty much achieved, which was down to the commitment and determination of the excellent Housing team.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness introduced and welcomed Sophie Sajic, Strategic Director, Housing and Communities, who was in attendance at the meeting of the Panel.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing confirmed that the Food Safety team had completed the high-risk inspections prior to the end of the financial year, with one outstanding. This required a visit to be made during operational

hours. Significant in-roads had also been made in reducing the number of medium risk inspections from 200 in December 2025 to less than seventy, which would be inspected in the new financial year. The Food Team continued to prioritise their work, investigate complaints and ensured that the public were protected. In the past couple of weeks, two food businesses had voluntarily closed following inspections by officers where pests had been found on the premises and there had been poor hygiene due to no hot water on site. The Team was planning a health and safety project commencing in April 2026 regarding the safety of spa pools at holiday parks in the district, alongside health and safety requirements for cleaning staff.

Fees and charges for licencing had been agreed for the next financial year. The Chairman of the New Forest Taxi Association had requested a review of the taxi tariff, at the recent meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee. The taxi trade would be consulted on the level of support for a review.

The draft Creative and Cultural Framework would be published for public consultation shortly. The feedback survey would be available on the Council website and shared with the creative industries.

The Council had worked with its health partners including the Integrated Care Board to deliver a health awareness event at Thorney Hill. This provided the isolated community an opportunity to meet with health and wellbeing professionals which included a dentist, who saw twelve patients, one of which needed three tooth extractions.

A creative health workshop was delivered to local health colleagues in partnership with Culture in Common and had since supported the delivery of a number of creative health clubs across the district.

Four additional story trails had been developed across the district which encouraged families to explore their local, open spaces.

63 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

The Chairman reminded the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel members that they were able to suggest agenda items for the Work Programme.

CHAIRMAN