

14 JULY 2025

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 14 July 2025

* Cllr John Sleep (Chairman)
Cllr Dave Penny (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
- * David Hawkins
- * John Haywood
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Nigel Linford

Councillors:

- * Patrick Mballa
- * Colm McCarthy
- * David Millar
- * Ian Murray
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- * Adam Parker
- * 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:

Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Lee Ellis, Daniel Reynafarje, Paul Thomas and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Brand, Penny and Hartmann.

13 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2025, be confirmed.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that since taking office in May, that he had represented the Council at various events across the district and the wider Hampshire area. Those included Mayor Making ceremonies and Civic Services. He highlighted the following engagements:

Meet and Greet Session and Armed Forces Day

The Chairman attended the meet and greet session for new employees at Appletree Court as well as raising the flag for Armed Forces Day on 23 June, alongside Cllr Alvin Reid, the Armed Forces Champion and representatives from the Armed Forces based at Marchwood. Cllr Reid and the Chairman also attended the Armed Forces Day event hosted by Fawley Parish Council on 21 June.

South East Reserves Forces and Cadets Association

The Chairman was pleased to attend the South East Reserves Forces' and Cadets' Association Armed Forces Briefing on 26 June.

Hampshire Scouts AGM

On 29 June, the Chairman had the pleasure of attending the Hampshire Scouts AGM at Ferny Crofts, which was a very informative and interesting event. The Chairman also met fellow civic heads, team leaders and volunteers.

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire

The Chairman had the pleasure of meeting HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson, on two occasions this month, firstly at the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award Holders' Reception and then at the annual reception for incoming Mayors and Chairmen.

Recruitment and Learning

The Chairman was accompanied at the event by Zoe Ormerod, Lead Officer for recruitment and learning. Across the Council there was now 18 apprenticeships underway – in diverse areas from grounds maintenance and project management to team leader and fire safety. The Chairman felt that it was a pleasure to attend the event, to present the award and to witness first hand some of the budding stars of the future.

Brockenhurst College Gala

The final highlight was the Chairman's attendance at the Brockenhurst College Gala awards on Thursday evening, last week. The Chairman was delighted to present the award for 'Apprentice of the Year', which the Council proudly sponsored.

To conclude, the Chairman was looking forward to representing the Council at the New Forest Show later in July and encouraged everyone to go along and visit the Council's marquee, where Council staff would be sharing information about recycling and our new waste service, with a variety of activities and games for the whole family.

16 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Local Government Reorganisation

The Leader reported she had been representing the Council in its work with Councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Leader felt that the District Council position had been made very clear and she was pleased to have the support of Group Leaders to back the Council's campaign. Members had access to materials and members were asked to encourage their residents to take part in the survey. This, alongside the Council's deliberative engagement, demonstrated its commitment to listen to residents voices in making the case for the future of the Forest.

The Leader reported she had recently met many of the Council's partners which included Andrew Parry-Norton Chairman, Commoners' Defence Association and Brice Stratford. The importance of securing a strong future for commoning was discussed. At their request, on behalf of the Council, the Leader had sent them a letter which noted that the New Forest Commoners had self-identified as a national minority, in the context of the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" and that they had a distinct cultural heritage and identity, with a continuity that was tied to, and defined by, the specific territory of the New Forest. This was, of course, something that the Council was keen to preserve and ensure was protected through local government reorganisation.

CIL Grant Funding

The Leader was also keen that all members were aware that in readiness for 2026 to 2027, the Council had opened applications to local organisations, community groups, and businesses for grants of up to £100,000 towards funding local infrastructure projects. This funding was available through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and the application window was open until 8 August. Over the last two years, the Council had awarded funds towards nearly 60 projects around the district.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

The Leader was proud to let members know that the Council had been awarded silver in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which celebrated UK employers who demonstrated exceptional support to those who serve, or had served in the Armed Forces, as well as their families. This reflected a journey of continued progression and partnership working.

17 REPORT OF CABINET - 7 MAY 2025

There were no speakers on the item considered by Cabinet on 7 May 2025.

18 REPORT OF CABINET - 2 JULY 2025**PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET****Item 1 – Corporate Plan: Key Performance Data for Quarter 4 2024-2025 and Target Refresh April 2025 to March 2026**

A Member raised that it was important to have KPI's relevant to the Council's priorities, recognising that the residents survey would not be undertaken. It was suggested that this be removed as a performance indicators and instead areas such as the asset review, waste service performance, customer service feedback, housing tenancy and staff feedback (relevant to transformation) be looked at, and ongoing projects which would be relevant for the next couple of years, with targets which were positive and achievable. In response, the Leader confirmed that the comments were noted.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**Item 7 - Financial Monitoring Report (Provisional Budget Outturn 2024/25)****Part I – Items Resolved by Cabinet**

A member stated that over the years the Council had consistently underspent and although they supported the recommendations, they requested that excess monies, along with CIL, be spent on residents of the New Forest before the new Council was established. It was also felt that on the Waterside there would be projects where those monies would help enhance residents lives and would show that the Council was serious in its statement that it was one authority. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate reported the Council was investing significant sums in the regeneration of Totton and Eling Tide Mill, alongside supporting the whole of the New Forest.

A question was raised on what was felt to be a significant underspend on disabled facilities grants of £500,000 and therefore, should the availability of the grant be further advertised or had the Council over-budgeted. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness clarified that the sum had been set aside for private sector housing and had been no demand for the grant, although the HRA was always overspent.

Another Member agreed with £2.5m being moved to Capital Reserves and that this should provide an opportunity for Councillors to consider how it could be used in the next budget.

It was felt that the Council's, along with central government and Hampshire County Council's finances were being used for local government reorganisation with little being spent on residents who wanted good services and low council tax. There was also concern that historically local government reorganisation hadn't proceeded and that a plan B should be considered. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate confirmed that the Council carried prudent reserves and that local government reorganisation had traditionally been a bumpy ride. As the Council was both prudent and prepared, £350,000 had been allocated to the local government reorganisation reserve. When the new Council was formed, the Council_reserves would be transferred.

Part II – Recommendations to Council

Cllr Heron introduced the item and moved the recommendation, from the Cabinet meeting held on 2 July 2025. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Members were asked to approve the addition of £500,000 to the Capital Programme to facilitate improvements across the Council's depot estate.

RESOLVED:

That £500,000 be added to the Capital Programme to facilitate improvements to the Council's depot estate.

Item 8 – Strategic Asset Management Plan

Cllr Heron, introduced the report and recommendation for Council. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Strategic Asset Management Plan be adopted.

19 QUESTIONS

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

From Cllr Parker to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on whether lockable bins were considered as part of the waste collection rollout.

From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden requesting information on missed bin collections.

From Cllr C McCarthy to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden on the number of complaints had been made by residents regarding the rollout of the new waste collection system.

From Cllr Millar to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden asking what changes the Council was considering ahead of phase 2 of the rollout of wheelie bins.

From Cllr Clark to the Leader of Council, Cllr Cleary regarding a detailed, evidence based financial model that proved New Forest residents would not be forced to cross – subsidise services in other parts of the new Council.

From Cllr Dowd to the Leader of Council, Cllr Cleary regarding if the constitution of the new authority would ensure the voices of the towns and villages were not drowned out.

From Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, regarding whether it would be possible to produce a leaflet to help residents deal with fly tipping issues they faced on what was deemed private land.

From Cllr Cullen to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, regarding what thresholds would cause the Council to withhold support for devolution and local government reorganisation.

From Cllr Haywood to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies, regarding home electric vehicle chargers and home charger installations in Council properties in the New Forest.

From Cllr Parker to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, regarding the lack of guidance and advice for Councillors in pre-empting some of the issues that had arisen and the amount of confusion on new expectations out there regarding the new waste collection roll out.

From Cllr Parker to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, regarding the idea to fill out postcards with pleasantries and praise to give to the collection teams.

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

20 NOTICE OF MOTION

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

This Council resolves that:-

The Leader of the Council write directly to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government and our Members of Parliament for New Forest East and West to reiterate our opposition to the proposed changes. This is in addition to the detailed response that will be drafted in response to the consultation itself, and that will have been informed by engagement with Members, our current planning committee, our Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel and our Agents Panel.

Cllr Ward seconded the motion.

A significant number of members spoke in support of the motion. Those who supported the motion raised concern in relation to the erosion of powers for both Councillors and the Planning Committee, loss of local knowledge, target driven planning, the quality of future housing and the difficulty in refusing a planning application if it didn't provide affordable housing.

It was also recognised that Town and Parish Councils had an important role in the planning process and this would be even more important following local government reorganisation.

Members were pleased to see agreement across the Council on the motion as it showed that the concerns were strongly felt by everyone in the New Forest, as well as everyone in the country. Cllr Tipp was thanked for bringing the motion to Council.

RESOLVED:

That the motion was supported.

Council noted that:

Angela Rayner (the Deputy Prime Minister) has published a planning and infrastructure bill designed to liberalise planning rules. The Local Government Association has written to ministers to express reservations about this plan.

Council believed that:

The proposed changes will lead to the vast majority of planning decisions being made with no input from Councillors. It is the democratic role of councillors to be involved in the decision making process of planning applications. Removing the ability for councillors to discuss, debate or vote on key developments in their localities could erode public trust in the planning system and local government itself.

Council resolved:

That the Leader of the Council writes to Angela Rayner (the Deputy Prime Minister), outlining its opposition to this plan. That the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel prepares mechanisms for Councillors to express views on planning applications related to their ward.

Note: the letter to the Secretary of State and the response from the Secretary of State are attached to these minutes.

21 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN