

22 JANUARY 2026

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 22 January 2026

* Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (Chairman)

* Cllr John Sleep (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Alan Alvey
* Jack Davies
* Jacqui England
* Barry Rickman

Councillors:

* Alex Wade
Christine Ward
* Phil Woods

*Present

In attendance:

Substitute:

John Adams

Officers Attending:

Ingrid Archer, Alan Bethune, Rebecca Drummond, Tim Guymer, Ryan Stevens, Paul Whittles, Saqib Yasin and Lee Ellis

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alvey and Ward. Cllr Adams was in attendance as a nominated substitute for Cllr Alvey

40 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

42 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

43 ANNUAL UPDATE FROM CITIZENS ADVICE NEW FOREST

An annual update on the Citizens Advice, New Forest was provided by the Service Manager – Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services and a presentation was

provided by the Chief Officer, New Forest Citizens Advice and from the Chair to the Board of Trustees, New Forest Citizens Advice.

The presentation covered service delivery, client issues, current services, delivering value to communities, changes to income and building for the future.

A Panel Member asked whether engagement had been undertaken with Citizens Advice groups in Southampton, Eastleigh, Winchester, Test Valley and East Hampshire regarding combined grant funding and future engagement. In response, it was confirmed that Hampshire Citizens Advice was a consortium created for the whole of Hampshire to enable funding bids. Nationally, Citizens Advice had launched an initiative called Stronger Together which would look at how Citizens Advice could adapt to local government reorganisation. Regular meetings had been held across Hampshire to establish what local government reorganisation could look like. Citizens Advice were aware of the different needs of clients in different areas across Hampshire, realistic to the challenges which local government faced and were investigating alternative funding.

A Panel member asked how the Citizens Advice attracted volunteers. In response, it was confirmed there were numerous ways that volunteers were recruited with all volunteers undertaking an extensive training programme to ensure that clients would be supported and whether the role was right for the volunteer.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate thanked New Forest Citizens Advice for the work they had undertaken for the residents of the New Forest and asked whether the organisation received funding from central government to provide benefit advice. It was confirmed that funding was available for some aspects of benefit advice such as the call centre for universal credit based at Solent East. However, there was no direct central government funding to New Forest Citizens Advice for benefits advice other than if it was included in a specific, delivered contract.

Another Panel Member thanked the New Forest Citizens Advice for the service provided to constituents who had used their advice with great satisfaction and asked how members could signpost residents to the services. It was confirmed that contact with Citizens Advice could be a big step for many and Citizens Advice tried to be as approachable as possible by undertaking outreach to build relationships with clients. An example was provided of a School Financial Inclusion worker who worked across eight schools in the Ringwood and Fordingbridge area and had undertaken work to embed themselves with the schools and communities to build a relationship.

It was confirmed that social media, posters, etc were used to publicise New Forest Citizens Advice services alongside working in partnership with the voluntary sector and the Council. Citizens Advice were aware that there was a balance between helping as many residents as possible and limited resources to provide services.

A copy of the presentation was attached.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the contents of the report and the presentation from Citizens Advice, New Forest.

44 CORPORATE PLAN: KEY PERFORMANCE DATA FOR QUARTER 2 2025-2026

The Performance and Insight Manager provided an overview of the Corporate Plan Key Performance Data for Quarter 2 2025-2026.

An update was provided on KPI 38 – Staff Turnover. It was confirmed that it was an annual measure and therefore had not been reported at Quarter 2. Follow up actions were continuing from the previous year end position, which included HR actively pursuing leaver questionnaires and the introduction of a new HR dashboard which provided greater insight into KPI 38. The performance of KPI 38 was regularly reported to the HR Committee.

A question was asked regarding KPI 48 – Percentage unscheduled downtime for critical systems, as the target was 5%, however the performance had never risen above 1%. It was confirmed that there had been a target revision agreed for Quarter 3 which would be less than 3% to reflect the performance.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Panel considered and reviewed the Q2 2025-2026 dashboard; and
2. comments would be passed for onward consideration by Cabinet.

45 NEW FOREST ENTERPRISE CENTRE - FUTURE GOVERNANCE

An overview was provided by the Assistant Director – Place Development on the future governance of the New Forest Enterprise Centre. The report assessed future governance options for the New Forest Enterprise Centre and identified a Community Interest Company (CIC) as the preferred model.

It was confirmed that a CIC was a non-profit organisation and would provide a wider area of funding available to the New Forest Enterprise Centre.

A Panel member asked whether the payment of the Council's increase rent share would be of help to the Council's medium term financial position. It was confirmed by the Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer that there had been no income from the Enterprise Centre to the Council since 1990. It was also confirmed that the Council had reviewed its asset base and there were no other assets similar to the New Forest Enterprise Centre.

There were potential risks regarding governance, finance and operations which would need to be addressed. The CIC model would require a new, regulatory framework to ensure that the Council's interests and the Enterprise Centre's community purpose was protected.

It was confirmed that the current representatives from the Council on the Board were the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Corporate and Planning and Economy, along with the Assistant Director – Place Development. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate was also Chairman of the Board. The future composition of the Board would be subject to discussion. The current Board had been keen to explore different ownership models and consultation would need to be undertaken with staff and occupiers of the centre.

It was intended to commission a consultant to provide an analysis of the options available and a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Panel noted the intention to explore the option to transition the New Forest Enterprise Centre to a Community Interest Company model; and
2. Supported the next steps as presented in the report.

46 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

An overview was provided by the Transformation and Improvement Manager on the transformation programme update, which covered Netcall implementation, the housing maintenance and repairs system (MARS) and the Programme Management Office.

It was confirmed that transformation progress would continue to be reported in the usual way, with ongoing projects. As the Netcall project was closed down, there would be clear objectives contained within the Transformation Strategy and a future report would be submitted to the Panel on the revised position.

A Panel member asked if awareness training would be available for the employee networks, to ensure that employees would be aware as to how they could assist their colleagues. It was confirmed by the Assistant Director – Transformation that the Council had expanded the opportunity for new and existing groups to share information, support each other and develop. HR provided a programme of support activities which had included menopause awareness training, drop-in sessions and monthly meet ups.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

47 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK VISIT REPORT

An overview was provided by the Assistant Director – Transformation on the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback visit.

It was confirmed that there had been positive feedback with a recognition that the Council environment was changing rapidly due to local government reorganisation.

A Panel member expressed the view that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were not a critical friend as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman roles were members of the majority group.

It was confirmed that reports on asset management would be presented on a more regular basis, as required. The Council had actively engaged with Parish and Town Councils and further engagement would be undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

48 ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Assistant Director – Finance provided an overview on the Asset Maintenance and Replacement Programme and General Capital Fund Capital Programme 2026/27.

A Panel member asked whether the Lymington Public conveniences refurbishment would be in 2026/27 or 2027/28. It was confirmed that the Council had not yet gone out to tender for the works and therefore a fully scoped schedule was still to

be determined. When the Council was aware of the detailed schedule for all refurbishments of public conveniences it would be reported. It was confirmed that all public conveniences were within the maintenance programme to raise the standard of all public conveniences, across the District.

It was also confirmed that the Hythe Promenade project would be concluded in 2026.

A Panel member asked whether external funding opportunities had been investigated for the Eling Tide Mill project. It was confirmed that the Tide Mill was now operational and would be more appealing to external funders. Further works outlined in the capital programme still to be undertaken would also enhance the asset. The Council had engaged with external parties to see what funding was available and to gauge interest in the project.

It was confirmed that the Salisbury Road office refurbishment would be funded by the Commercial Properties Sinking fund, which had been created from the £50,000 residual balance from the previous year's budgets. There would also be an ongoing contribution of £50,000 each year into the sinking fund, thereafter.

Following the cliff fall at Barton on Sea it was confirmed that there was nothing contained within the report for funding of works. However, within the coastal and open spaces budgets there was a £350,000 annual maintenance budget which could be used across all of the Council's coastal activity. It was noted this was an undefended section of the coast.

In response to a question regarding the scheduled works and the temperature of the swimming pool at Applemore Leisure Centre, the Assistant Director – Finance reported he would respond directly to the Panel member who raised the question.

RESOLVED:

The Panel supported:

- 1) the schedule of projects as included within the report and summarised via Appendix 1 and 2 for onward consideration by the Cabinet.
- 2) the proposed Cabinet recommendations as follows:
 - a) endorse the schedule of projects, as included within the report and summarised via Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, noting that final approval will come through Council consideration of the 2026/27 budget.
 - b) notes that this programme commits the Council to expenditure beyond 2026/27 whereby a project commences in 2026/27 and extends into future years.
 - c) recommend to Council that the Vehicle and Plant replacement programme be approved for a 2-year period, covering purchases due in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

49 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27

An overview was provided by the Assistant Director – Finance on the Capital Strategy 2026/27.

It was confirmed that Officers were conscious of the change in position that the Council had found itself in regarding the increased need to use debt and that this had been factored into budgets. Officers stated that they were confident that this was a sustainable position in the short and medium term for the Council.

RESOLVED:

The Panel members supported:

1. The Capital Strategy 2025/26 included in Appendix 1, noting this may be subject to minor amendments prior to Cabinet; and
2. The proposed Cabinet recommendation as follows:
 - a. Recommend to Full Council that the Capital Strategy 2026/27 be approved including the adoption of the Minimum Revenue Payment (MRP) statement.

50 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE

The Panel received updates from the Portfolio Holders.

Cllr Jill Cleary – Leader

The Leader reported that the Corporate Peer Challenge was overwhelmingly positive although the Council needed to keep its priorities under review due to the capacity required to establish the new unitary authority.

Progress had been made on the new Programme Management Office (PMO) and the Leader was supportive of this. Members would receive regular updates on the PMO.

The Council had submitted its local government reorganisation consultation response to central government, within the timeframe and awaited the decision. It was hoped that Option 1 would be the outcome. However, if not, the Council would work positively and make sure that the Council's voice was heard.

The first internal Local Government Reorganisation Board meeting had been held recently and was attended by the Leader. The Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group had also been in attendance. An informative overview had been provided on the work undertaken to date along with the establish of a wider programme for the implementation of its governance.

Following a question from a Panel member it was confirmed that the Chief Executive of the Council was working with the Chief Executive of Southampton City Council on local government reorganisation. There were also regular Leader meetings, where the work on local government reorganisation was discussed. All Councils were working and talking with each other, although some conversations were more difficult than others. The Leader had been tasked by the Council to achieve the best possible outcome for the residents and would continue to work on that, even if it was not the preferred option.

Cllr Jeremy Heron, Finance and Corporate

The Portfolio Holder reported that Council budgets faced significant challenges, more so than in previous years. The proposed settlement for 2026/2027 had not yet been announced but it was thought the settlement would be challenging with the significant area of new burden funding potentially not being delivered to the Council. At the same time there was significant changes within the Council such as the waste rollout with additional challenges and costs associated with the rollout. Delivery of the Council's statutory services would be the priority with other areas reviewed to make sure that finances could deliver those most important areas. Due to local government reorganisation it was important that the Council ended with a sound financial position and showed a balanced budget.

51 WORK PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

CHAIRMAN

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Our impact in 2024/25

The difference we make in the New Forest

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New Forest



Minute Item 43

Our Mission

Deliver a sustainable advice and information service that is relevant and accessible to the people of the New Forest. This means making sure that Citizen Advice New Forest can adapt its services continually to ensure that it reflects the demands of the community it serves.

NFDC Priorities

1. People

Helping people in the greatest need with easy access to services

⇒ 2. Place

Delivering opportunity and services that shape our place

3. Prosperity

Promoting a strong local economy through effective partnerships

CANF Priorities

1. Building our TEAM to meet changing client needs

2. Reviewing the DELIVERY of our services to meet client need

3. Identifying new SERVICES in a changing landscape

4. Delivering VALUE to our communities

Our Team

We are lucky that over **60** volunteers give nearly 16,000 hours of their time to help reach as many people in the New Forest as we can.

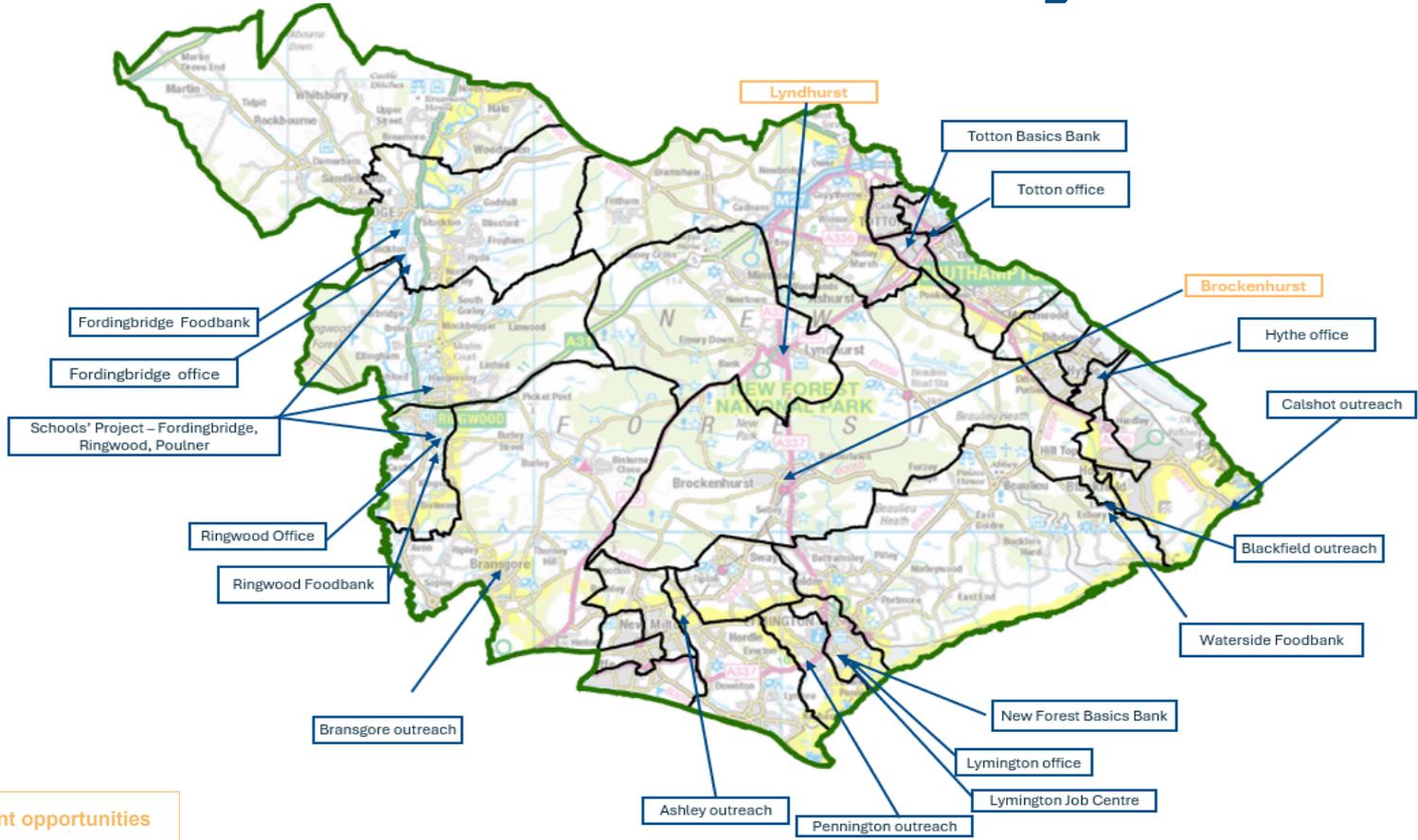
Our volunteers contributed the equivalent of **£329k** of their time during 2024/25.

¹² Volunteering provide benefits for volunteers too, such as improved employability, a sense of purpose and greater wellbeing.

We also employ **30** staff, the majority working on our projects.



Our Service Delivery



How Residents Accessed Help from CANF

People access us in different ways, and most people use more than one contact route whilst receiving support from us.

In 2024/25:

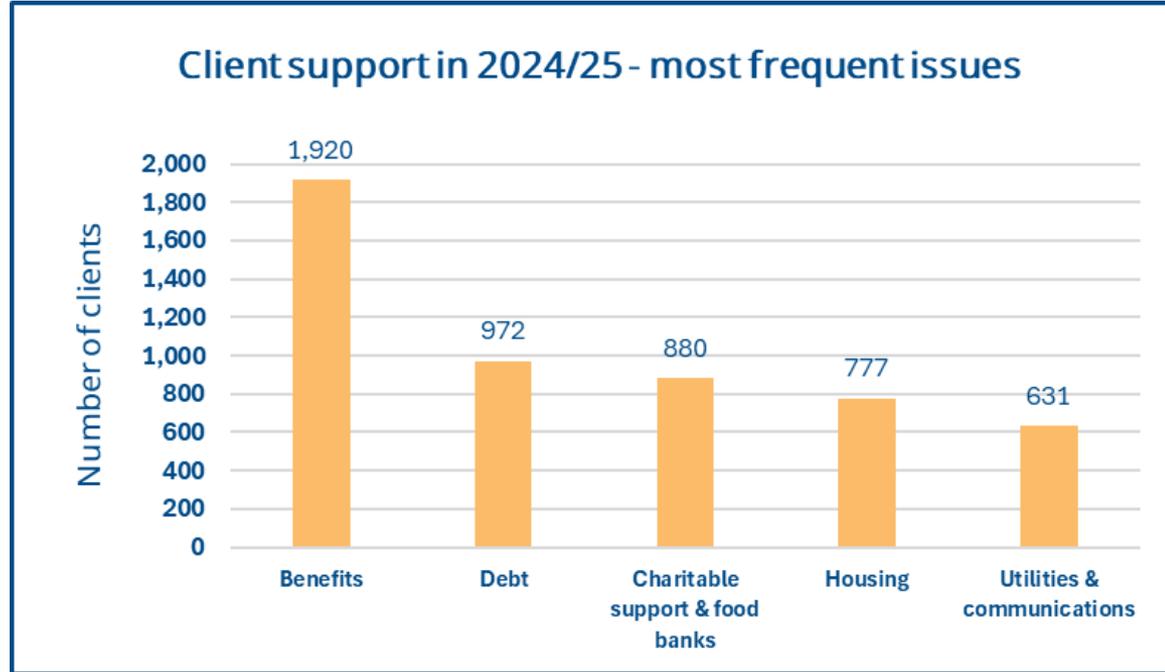
- Contacts with clients in via our main channels, (In-person, Email, Adviceline and Telephone) were up **22%** on 2023/24
- On average clients had **4.7** contacts with us (up from **3.5** in 2023/24)
- **52%** of clients had at least one face-to-face meeting with us after we increased outreach services (up from **42%** in 23/24)

Addressing Client Issues

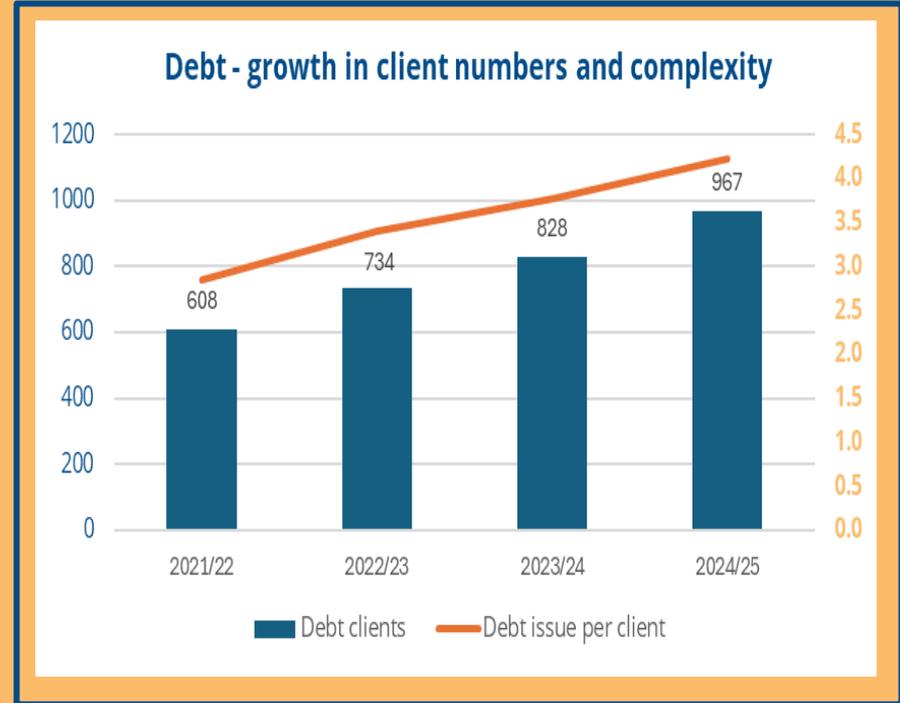
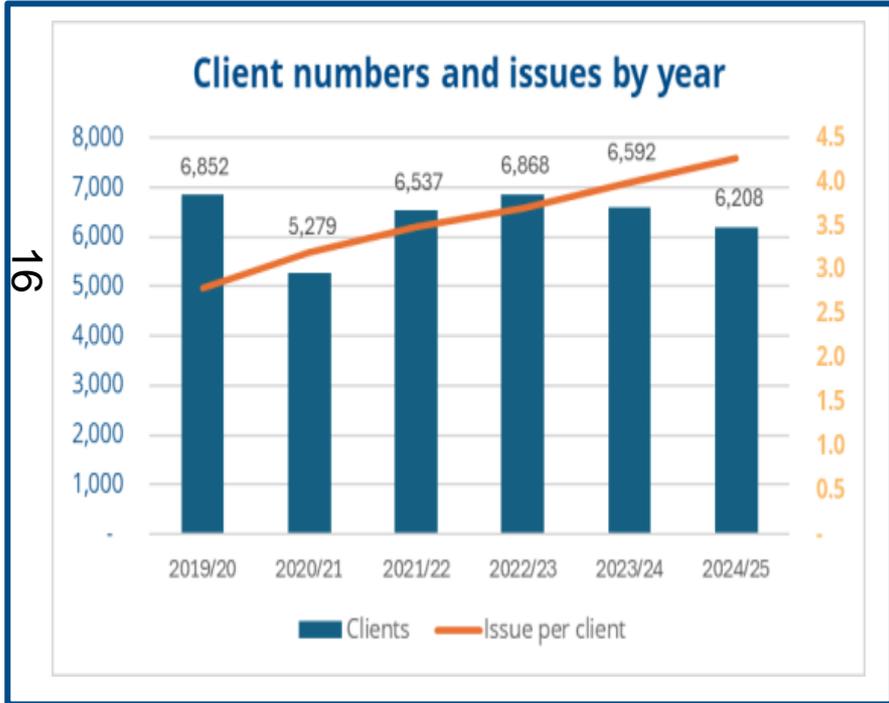
We help people with a range of problems. In 2024/25 these were the 5 most requested advice areas.

Many people come to us for help with multiple problems.

On average, each client had **4.2** issues in 24/25, up from **2.8** in 19/20



Client Issues are Becoming more complex



Our Current Services

Debt

Advice to help people deal with, and break cycles, of indebtedness.



Home & Well

Supporting people as they return home from hospital.



Financial Capability

Advice on a range of money issues to promote happier, healthier lives



Macmillan

Holistic advice service to people affected by cancer.



Energy Advice

Helping people struggling with the cost of energy.



Financial Inclusion

Working with schools & foodbanks to support people out of poverty.



General Advice

Delivering Value to Our Communities

We use a Treasury-approved model to calculate the financial value achieved by CANF.

For every £1 invested in the New Forest advice service in 2024/25, we generated:

£3.38

in savings to
government and
public services
(fiscal benefits)

Total fiscal benefits
across the New
Forest:
£2.23m

£22.45

in wider economic
and social benefits
(public value)

Total public value
across the New
Forest:
£14.8m

£13.26

in financial value to
the people we help
(specific outcomes
to individuals)

Total financial
value across the
New Forest:
£8.8m

The difference all this makes

It's not possible to put a financial value on everything we do.

The wider impact of our advice – what we achieve because we solve problems and provide support – is just as important.

- Keeping people in employment or helping them back to work
- Preventing housing evictions and statutory homelessness
- Reducing demand for mental health and GP services
- Improving mental wellbeing and positive functioning
- Improved family relationships

Changes to our income mix

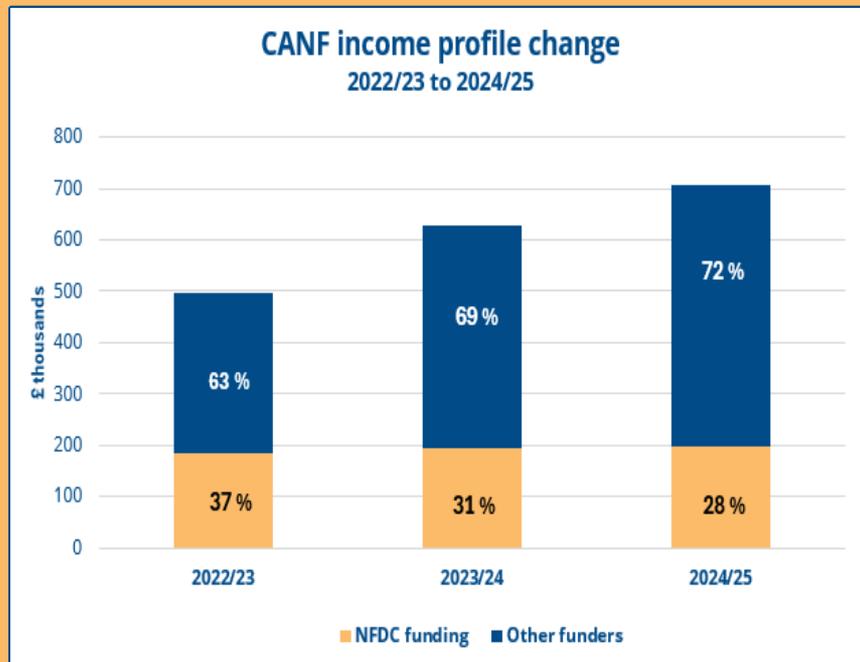
11 sources of funding in 2024/25

£710k in 2024/25



£496k in 2022/23

20



Building for the Future

21

Adapt our advice service to support more residents.

Grow our specialised services to meet future needs.

Work in partnership to ease the pressure on those that are struggling.

Make CANF sustainable.

Helping **people** to access the services they need.

Helping our communities become healthier and happier **places**.

Helping reduce the reliance on statutory services and increasing **prosperity** for our communities.

Ensuring LGR is an **opportunity** for all New Forest residents beyond 2028

Citizens Advice New Forest

<https://www.newforestcab.org.uk/>

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Presented by Neill Young – Chief Executive

Neill.young@canf.uk



New Forest