

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL BUDGET SPEECH 2019

	Over the past 4 years steps have been taken by this Conservative Council to deliver quality frontline services, despite significant reductions in central government grants. As we set our Council Tax and Budget for 2019 – 2020 our track record of sound financial management and prudent maintenance of reserves, we remain in a strong position to continue delivering essential services to our residents.
Our help to local business was recognised by the Federation of Small Businesses	We have worked hard to promote local business to make the New Forest prosperous.
Helping local business to grow is a priority	As sponsors of the New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards the Council works to promote business, whether big or small, within the District.
Helping local business benefits the whole economy	As a conservative Council we will continue to work with partners such as the New Forest Business Partnership and the Federation of Small Businesses to grow the New Forest economy and local business.
Our apprenticeship scheme supports the local economy for now and for the future	We will work with trade and professional bodies, education providers and local businesses to promote the benefits of apprenticeships, highlighting the opportunities they provide to both the apprentice, employment and the future.
Supporting local business such as the Royal Mail in their support of other businesses	Supporting all areas of local business is important to us.
Helping local business through investment	We are prepared to invest to support business. Last year we, together with Hampshire County Council, invested £75,000 in the imaginative '49' to help others in the New Forest develop their businesses, skills and knowledge.
Local Plan Submitted	More homes for local people starts with our Local Plan which we submitted in November 2018. This sets out providing 10,000 new homes over the next 20 years.
Championing our priority for homes for local people	Over the next four years we will buy or build more than 100 extra council houses for local families and we will continue to work with partners to provide even more.
The Housing team have developed new approaches to providing more homes for local people	Our Housing team have developed new approaches to provide more homes for local people.
Our community matters	Volunteers and community groups are the backbone of our vulnerable residents, helping protect our environment and cultural centres. In the last year we have supported many organisations, ranging from £229,500 to the Citizens' Advice Bureau to numerous small grants based on the recommendation of Councillors to organisations all working for the New Forest Community.
Review of Health and Leisure Centres demonstrates our commitment to long term solutions for community benefit	With over 1.6 million customer visits a year, our Health and Leisure Centres help to keep residents of all ages fit and healthy. We will protect and enhance this service by working with partners or creating an arm's-length organisation.

New investment reinforces our commitment to our community	The Council continues to invest in the District's five Health & Leisure Centres, including refurbishment of facilities at New Milton, Ringwood and Applemore.
Providing solutions that work for our community is our approach	We provide over 100 local services which our residents value highly, including refuse, planning, street cleaning, benefits, health and leisure and housing advice. We regularly review our services to understand how we can improve in line with what our customers want.
Setting high standards	Excellent services delivered to a high standard and value for money - that is our aim.
The achievements we have made have been recognised	"We are mighty impressed with the progress NFDC has made, and the speed in which it embraces change. Keep on doing what you are doing." That is what the Local Government Association peer challenge follow up review said.
Supporting our environment locally	While our street cleaning teams do an impressive job of keeping our streets clean and tidy we wouldn't be so effective without the numerous community groups who assist with litter initiative such as the Great British Spring Clean.
Supporting our environment nationally	We also do our bit Nationally, to try and support the recycling message. This year we launched at the New Forest Show our six in the sack initiative. A message for local residents but also visitors to the area to take home with them as well.
Supporting our environment worldwide	We have all seen the issues regarding plastics and the harm it has on the environment. We have removed all of the council's plastic cups and are setting an example with reusable water bottles.
Protecting our community through investment	We will continue to invest in our excellent services, like CCTV to help prevent crime working with others such as Hampshire Constabulary to protect our community.
Protecting our special environment by taking action against those who care less	We will continue to investigate and take action against those individuals who care less for our environment by fly-tipping and littering and we will also look at proactive ways to discourage these unsightly activities.
Protecting our special environment by working with others	The Council continues to work with others, both public and private sector to protect our special environment as well as understanding the impact that change has on other local communities.
Working with statutory and voluntary organisations to help support our community	We have provided over £450,000 of grant aid to support those working in our community for our residents.
Working with other statutory organisations to be more efficient	Working with others has enabled us to move our office staff from Lymington Town Hall, but maintaining a public front-desk, freeing up space that we have made available to the National Park, Police and private companies, reducing our costs and generating income. This helps us to continue to provide front-line services in an efficient and sustainable way and to ensure that residents of the New Forest can enjoy continuing excellent public services in the future.

Working with Solent LEP to help local business grow	The recent review of Local Enterprise Partnerships means that we are now working solely with the Solent LEP. We are using this opportunity to promote the New Forest and secure more investment funding for our local business. The New Forest Business Partnership is now being regularly attended by the Solent LEP Chief Executive and I have been offered the opportunity to present a key note address to the Solent LEP AGM on the "Vision for a future New Forest".
Investing in technology	We are investing in new technology. This will help us modernise. This is not only aimed at supporting our staff but also at Councillors, residents and customers. Next year will see us launch a new website and be able to offer customers new and more efficient services that they can access when it suits them.
Improving our workspace	We recognise the importance of a good well motivated workforce. It is therefore important as we develop more efficient services that our staff can work in modern and pleasant workspaces. Together with our investment in technology this will help ensure we attract and retain good quality staff that want to deliver good outcomes to our community. This is our objective to smarter working.
Delivering better services	As a Council we provide many services and everything we do is to ensure we provide both excellent services and excellent value for money.
Our employees work to achieve our goals	We have achieved a lot and I am grateful to my conservative Councillors, our Chief Executive Bob Jackson and NFDC staff for all their efforts.
We live within our means to benefit our community – because it matters	While the District Council collects council tax on behalf of the County Council, Fire Authority, Police and Town & Parish Councils, our share is currently £3 per household per week for a Band D dwelling.
	We will only increase our share of Council Tax in order to protect core services such as our refuse & recycling collections, health and leisure centres and environmental protection services.
	I commend the budget for 2019/2020 to you.