



New Administration following May 2019 local elections

A new Council, including 24 new Councillors, were returned

A Conservative Council you can trust, our manifesto set out what we intend to do for our community based upon sound financial planning that looks forward. This we are now setting out in a New Corporate Plan for the new administration from 2020 to 2024 – we are “In for the Long Run”

Cllr Mark Steele appointed as new Cabinet member for Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder



The 2020/21 budget includes £1.2M of open space and transportation projects delivering tangible social and environmental benefits to communities right across the District; the example at Augustus Park, Fordingbridge is just one.

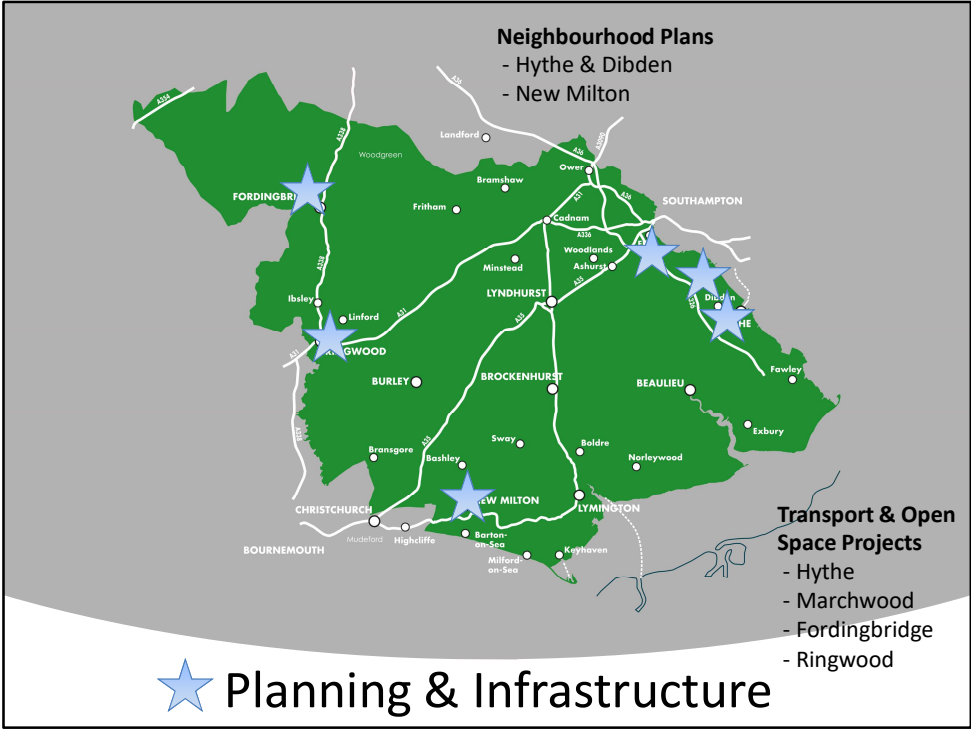
Our planning department is geared up to support individual homeowners as they look to improve their homes, and developers as they come forward with sites as outlined in the adopted local plan, providing valuable new homes to individuals who wish to live in the special place that is the New Forest.

It has been great to see this year our first Neighbourhood Plan Referendum held in Hythe & Dibden; next will be New Milton. Communities taking responsibility for planning the future of their own communities is important.

Our car parks will continue to support the vibrancy of our villages and high streets within the New Forest, provide good value for money and provide a valuable income to support other key frontline services delivered by the Council.

From April 2020, this Council will no longer be responsible for on-street parking and so the budget for 2020/21 is amended to take this change in service delivery from the District to the County into account.

The Council has worked hard on structuring a Building Control Service that homeowners want and need, we will continue to work hard on protecting and growing our market share demonstrating that we as a council can offer excellent quality services to our residents at good value for money.





Our housing service will continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities and we will fully utilise the £773,000 we have been awarded by Central Government in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping within the District.

We will deliver £2.2M of Disabled Facilities Grants, funded by the Better Care Fund and through housing rents, to ensure residents and tenants can stay comfortable in their homes for as long as possible.

A key priority for this Council is the delivery of additional Council owned housing. The capital programme allows for acquisitions and developments of £9M in 2020/21, and totalling £45M over the next 3 years to facilitate this. The summer of 2019 saw the delivery of 55 much needed new council homes, built by the Council in Totton (Compton and Sarum, and Stocklands), and before the end of March 2020, we will complete on the purchase of a further 23 homes in Ringwood.

The new housing allocation policy will be fully in effect during the whole of the 2020/21 financial year, meaning those with the greatest need will be housed first.

We will open more emergency temporary accommodation facilities, with schemes already completed in Blackfield and Hythe. 4 more facilities will open in 2020/21 throughout the district, enabling us to reduce our reliance on often, unsatisfactory

external B&B accommodation.

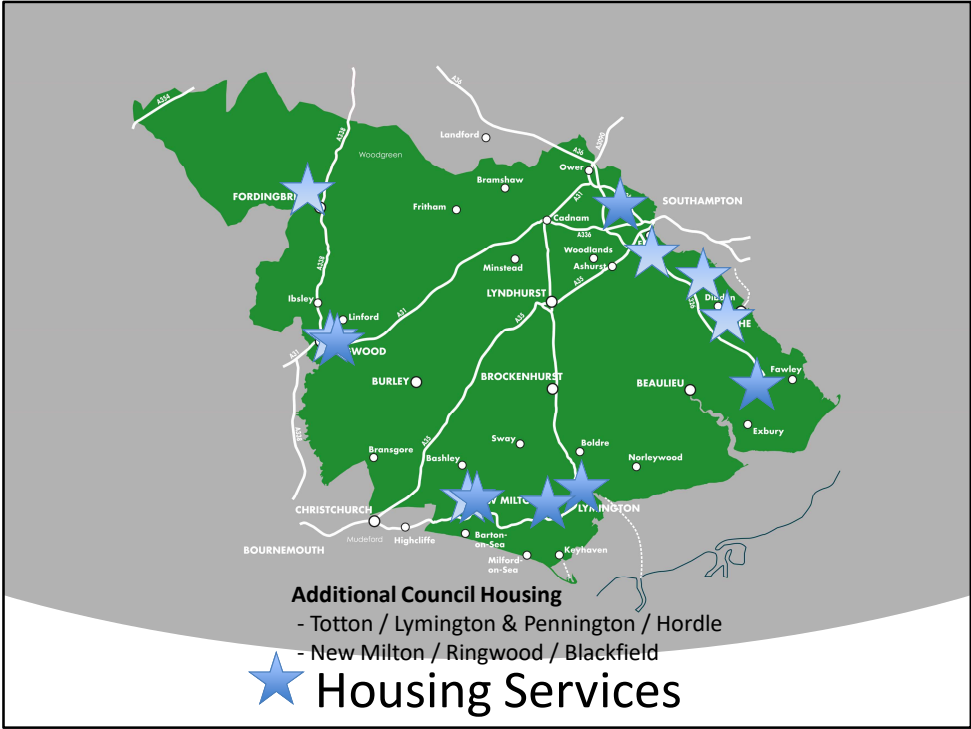
20/21 will see a number of new council housing developments coming to fruition-of particular note is the site at Moores Close, New Milton which was an allocated site under our old local plan. We competitively tendered and acquired the site at the end of 2019 (competing with a number of local developers) and we are aiming to build around 18 new homes for rent and shared ownership.

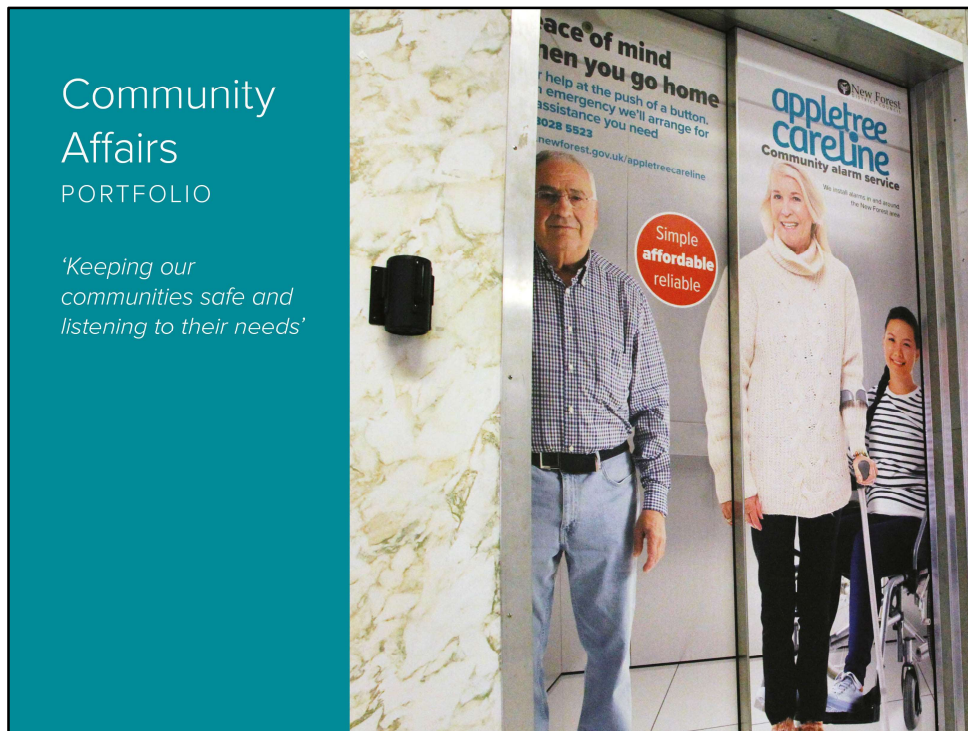
We are shortly to introduce our new Council Shared Ownership Scheme, which will be coming to Cabinet in April. This Scheme is aimed at those who, whilst able to rent in the private sector, cannot afford to buy a property on the open market. Under the Scheme, they will buy a part share in a council owned property and rent the remaining share from the Council and when they can afford it, will purchase further shares until they own it outright. This scheme will help a group of people ignored for so long.

We are devising a new Private Sector Housing Strategy with a Task and Finish Group. Through this, we will create better relationships with private landlords throughout the District and at the same time, we will use our influence and powers to bring about better standards in the private rented sector.

We will continue to bring all the voluntary groups and statutory bodies in the District together through our Homelessness Multi- Agency Forum to ensure that, as a collective, the right services are provided to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, who are often ignored.

In 2020/21 we will spend over £11M on the maintenance and improvement of our current council properties to maintain our high standards The rent payable will be Council will be an average of £100.57 per week, an increase of 2.7% on the previous year.





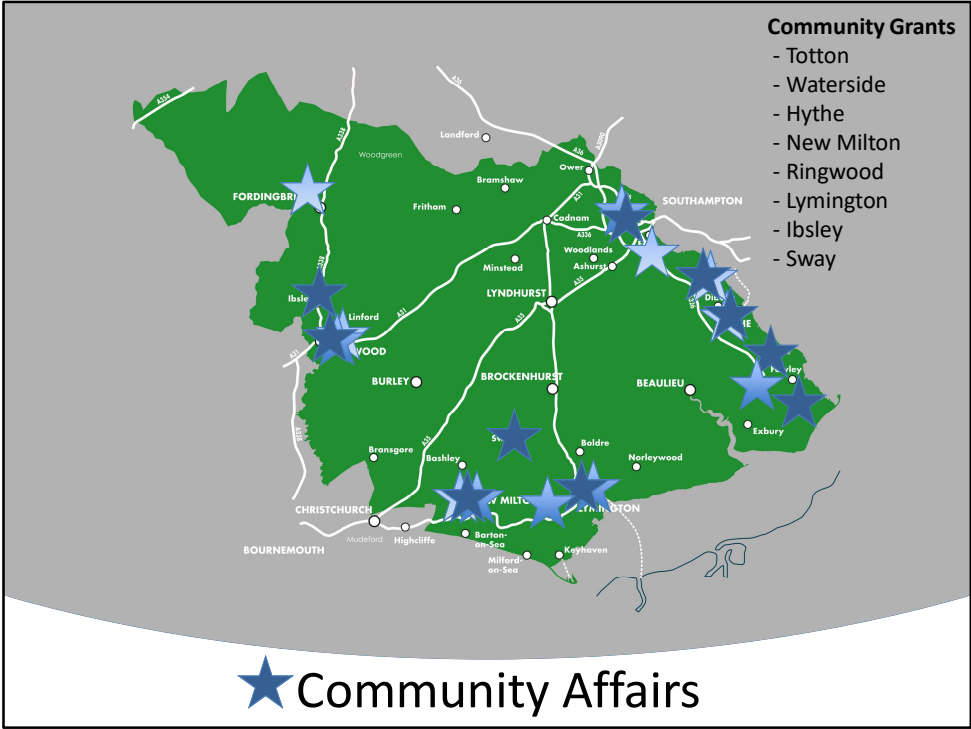
Community Safety will be at the heart of what is delivered within the Portfolio, and the Council is able to resource this important service appropriately within the 2020/21 budget.

The Council has invested in a modern and updated CCTV suite, and will invest a further £31,000 in 2020/21 in the replacement of cameras across the District, working with others to help keep our communities feeling safer. We will also look to capitalise on this excellent facility as we consider the potential roll out of a wider monitoring service across the District.

The Care Lines service will continue to support elderly and vulnerable residents of the new forest.

The 2020/21 budget includes much-needed investment in the Council's website, which will give residents, customers and businesses a modern way to transact and communicate with the Council.

I am extremely proud that earlier in February, the Cabinet was able to agree to award £214,000 in community grants; these grants encourage creativity and deliver wellbeing benefits to all areas of the New Forest and to those who use them and support the cultural heritage of the whole New Forest district.





Through sensible and prudent, some might even say conservative, medium term financial planning, the Council is committed to supporting front line service delivery and will continually look to optimise the use of the funds it has available

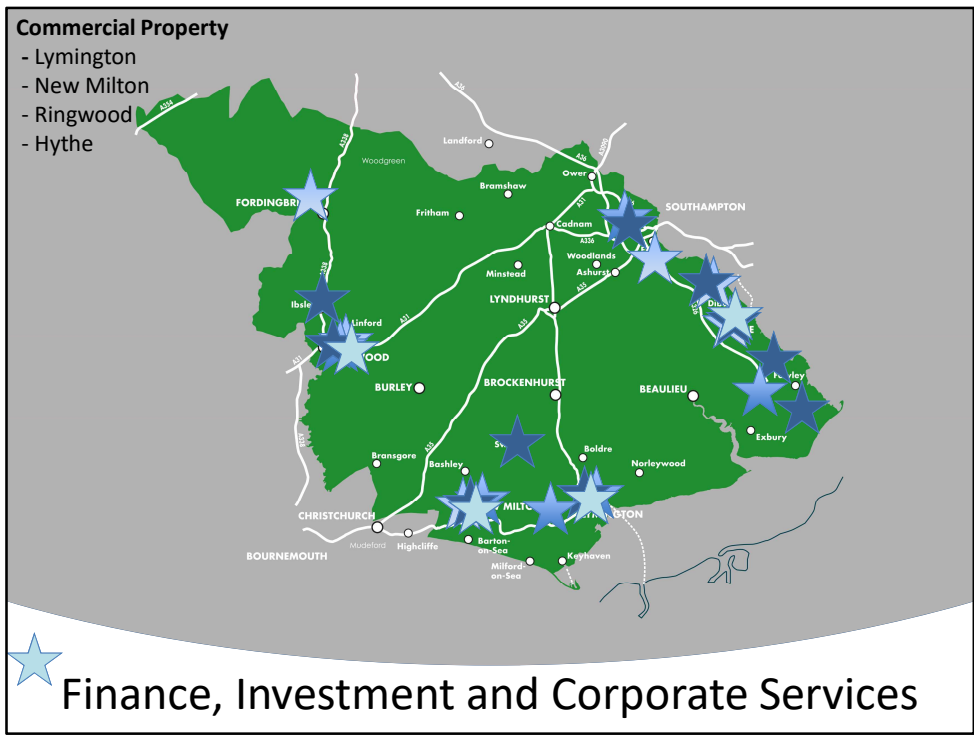
We will see essential additional income coming into the Council as we deliver on our proportionate approach to building a Commercial and Residential Property Portfolio. In 2020/21, this will include an exciting prospect of a new industrial site to be built out by this Council in Ringwood.

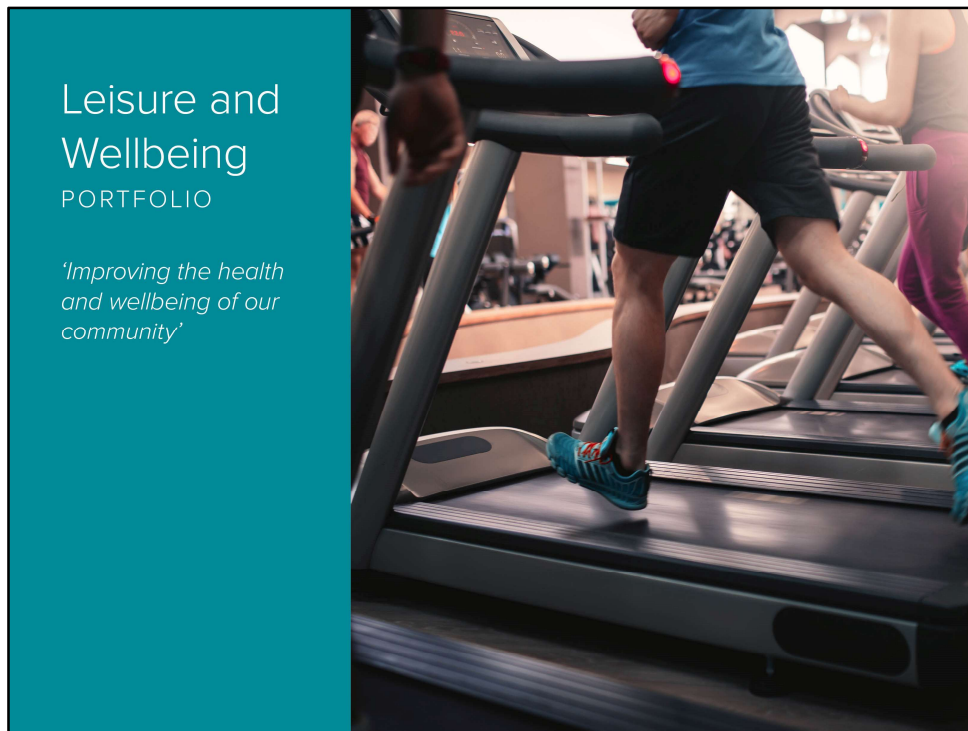
On top of income generation, our investment Portfolio will also bring employment into the New Forest, and will also provide much needed market housing from the Council as a responsible landlord, with purchases already made in Lymington and Totton.

There is little debate that the Council's ICT is in a stronger place now than it has ever been, and the £728,000 allowed for within the 2020/21 budget will continue to deliver improvements for the benefits of our tax payers

The Council will support those on low incomes through its Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and will continue to work in partnership with organisations across the Forest and at a national level supporting the transition to Universal Credit

In 2020/21 the Council will administer over £30M of Housing Benefit, and will continue to visit the homes of those in greatest need of our assistance and support



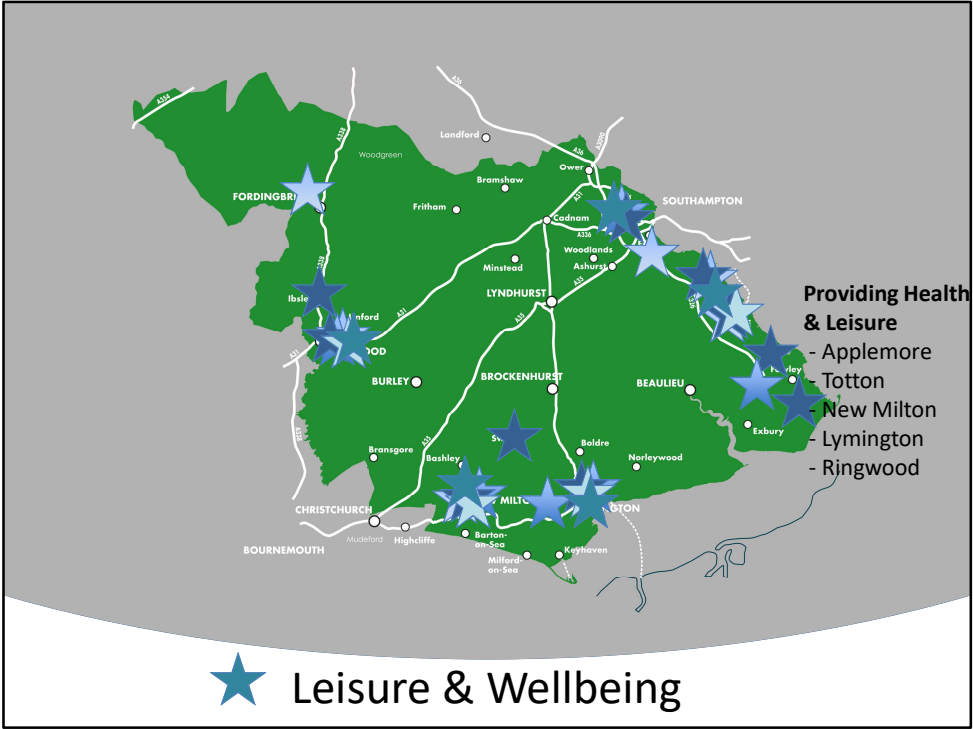


The budget for 2020/21 continues to invest in the wellbeing of our communities, most visibly through the 5 Leisure Centres serving the entire District located at Applemore, Totton, Ringwood, New Milton and Lymington. The whole Council will be engaged in a key decision during 2020/21 as we look to safeguard the provision of these important community facilities over the longer term and encourage more people in our community to engage in physical activity.

There is more however to this Portfolio than Leisure Centres; we have a wonderful landscape and a variety of activities that can be enjoyed right across the Forest and within the 40 mile coast line.

We continue to work well with our third party operators of Dibden Golf Centre, and the Council is positioned to invest in this facility, as demonstrated by the project included in the 2020/21 budget to resurface the Car Park.

Moving forward, we will look to develop our district wide Health and Wellbeing strategy, working with our key partners in the Health Service.





Arguably the most visible service that this Council delivers is the collection of household waste and recycling. Our recent resident consultation has received approximately 4,000 responses, highlighting that it is services and not Councils which are important to people. We need to do more to improve our recycling rates, and if more modern collection methods can be implemented this will make a key contribution to the Council achieving this outcome.

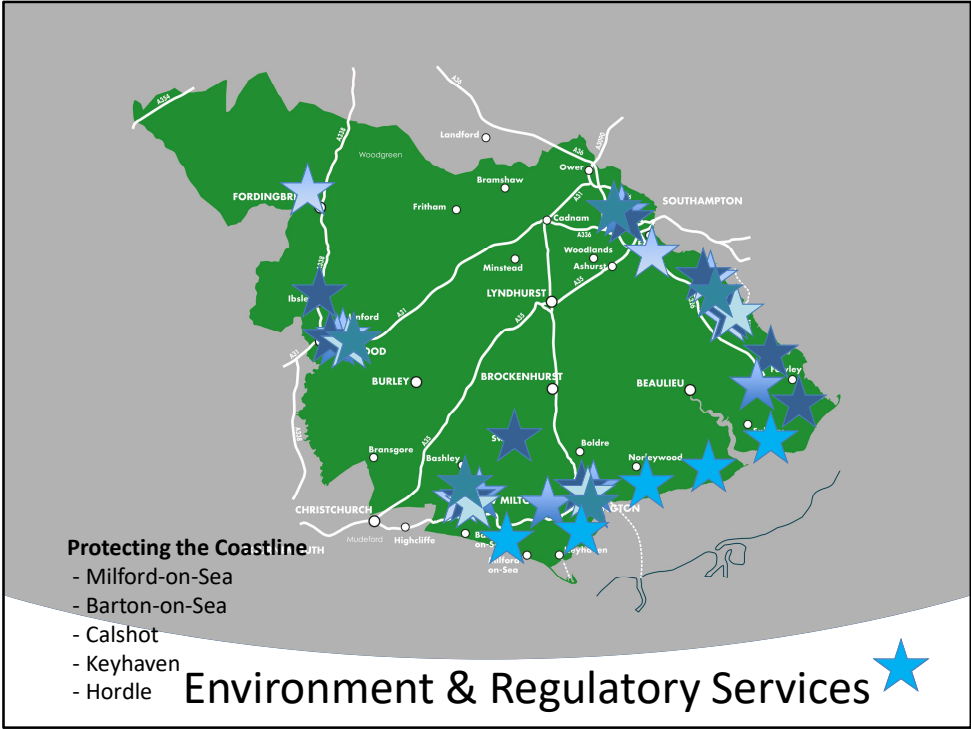
All of us have a responsibility to looking after the beauty of the New Forest, and if we all did a little more, the cumulative effect would be significant.

The Council's licencing and environmental health teams will continue to ensure standards of service delivery and hygiene standards make the New Forest a safe place to enjoy.

The Council takes its responsibility to maintain it's 40 miles of coast line very seriously, and we will continue to work closely with the strategic monitoring centre in Southampton and the Environment Agency to protect areas identified as at risk.

The Council will continue to maintain, protect and replace where required, its 28,000 council owned trees, through the revised council wide Tree Strategy.

Littering is something that is upsetting for us all, and we will continue to work with local residents and interested groups to understand why people litter and what interventions can be put in place to reduce litter across the district.



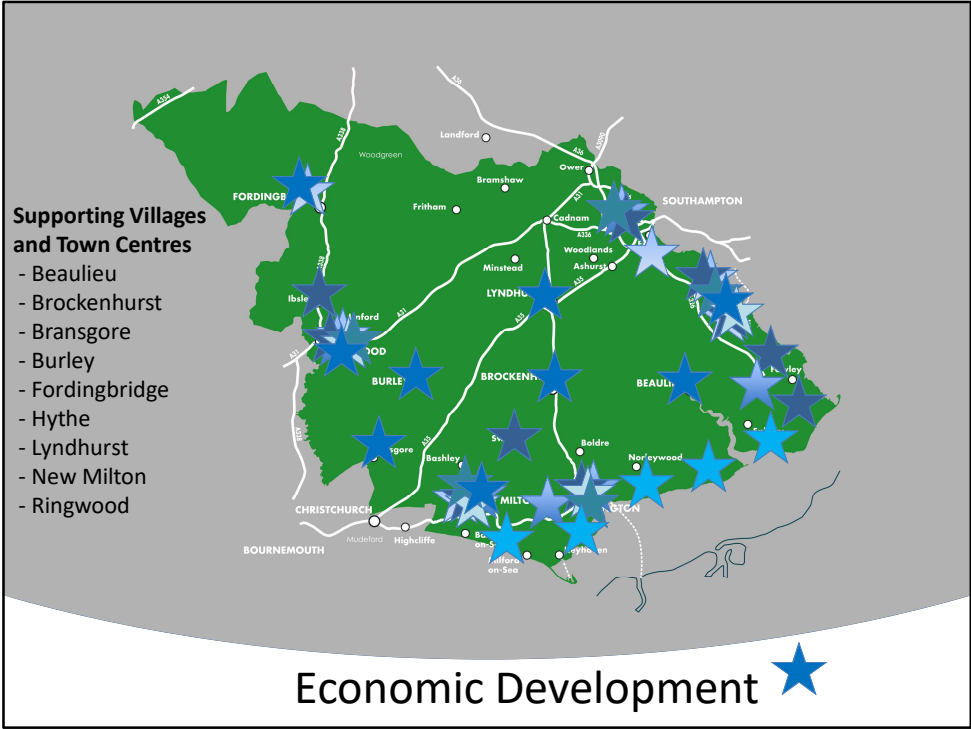


We have worked closely with Solent LEP and other partners over the last year and I am pleased to see them supporting much needed improvements to the A326.

Each year at the New Forest Business Partnership Awards I am taken back by the breadth of successful New Forest businesses, from high tech to marine to visitor, to food production - the list is endless of successful businesses here in the New Forest. We should be rightly proud, as this success benefits all in our community. This year's event at the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu was attended by a larger number of these enthusiastic business people.

The attraction of the New Forest is rightly reflected in the success of much of our visitor economy, which we continue to support both large and small.

We also must not forget we need to encourage the next generation, whether they be entrepreneurs of the future or highly skilled professionals. Our support for apprentices, both here at the Council and in our wider economy is something I wish to see us develop. We are fortunate to have good schools and colleges here in the New Forest, working to achieve higher levels of skills and learning.





We continue to thrive to be an employer of choice and offer staff the flexibility and the right tools/technology to deliver the diverse services we offer to our community.

I have recently met over 250 of our staff at some sessions with the Chief Executive. This was very enlightening experience and it was good to hear staff engaging on issues like “climate change”, technology and a wide range of subjects. Together with the Chief Executive I intend to report back on these sessions to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny.

Our values of community, teamwork, integrity, services and ambition will support how we as a Council work with our staff and partners.

We have made good progress on the Electoral review and Council tonight will agree the District Council submission to the Boundary Commission’s consultation.

Our community residents, business and visitors are interested in services and not who provides them. It is pleasing to receive approximately 4,000 responses to our consultation on Waste and recycling and it is good to see the progress we have made to address the real issues of affordable housing and homelessness. We are in challenging and changing times; it is about actions. Major issues like Climate change will only be addressed by actions and not words. I am pleased to see that it is what we are concentrating our efforts on for the future of this very special place.

Our action to review our Health and Leisure Centres is about protecting services going forward. It is not about closure or taking the assets out of the public sector as some would have you to believe or you might see elsewhere. What we are about is increasing physical activity and sustainability in the long term.

I am incredibly proud to present a balanced budget for 2020/21 that is investing in services, investing in council priorities and is investing in the New Forest District. Our services are dependant upon the efforts of our staff and it is important we also maintain our investment in them.

Pay has been raised as an issue, particularly by staff at our depots. With this in mind, I note that nationally, employers are offering a 2% annual increase next financial year. This may take time to be agreed with the Trade Unions. I would therefore like to ask the Chief Executive to implement a 2% increase from April 2020 and should the settlement be greater, this addition can be implemented at a later stage.

It is clear to me that there is shared desire between Councillors and staff alike to deliver excellent services to our communities and this is a budget that assists in achieving that goal.

We still have work to do as we consider our financial position going forward, but the 2020/21 budget I present to you tonight gives solid foundation for this Council to build upon.

I would like to personally thank all Councillors and staff who have contributed to getting the Council to this point.

As Leader, I present to you the Cabinet recommendation (set out at page 3 on the Report of Cabinet from the 19th February) for a General Fund budget of £19.194M for 2020/21. This we can deliver with a Council Tax of £178.36. An increase of less than 10p per week which goes a long way to securing the Council's financial sustainability beyond 2020/21.

I commend the budget to you.

