

# POSITION STATEMENT 2020

## ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



### Introduction - The New Forest

The New Forest is an area of southern England which includes one of the largest remaining tracts of unenclosed pasture land, heathland and forest in the heavily populated south east of England. It covers south west Hampshire and extends into south east Wiltshire and towards east Dorset. It is a unique place of ancient history, fascinating wildlife and stunning beauty and was established as a royal hunting preserve.

The local government administrative area of New Forest District Council (290 square miles) includes the New Forest National Park (206 square miles). Within the District there are 145 square miles of Crown land, managed by Forestry England.

The New Forest is a working forest that has prospered for nearly 1000 years. Many of the agricultural practices conceded by the Crown in historical times to local people are still retained. The most significant of these is the depasturing of ponies, cattle, pigs and donkeys in the open

forest by authorised local inhabitants known as Commoners. These unique agricultural commoning practices are administered by the Verderers.

The District council was created on 1 April 1974 and was a merger of the borough of Lymington, New Forest Rural District and part of Ringwood and Fordingbridge Rural District. The District is one of the most populated non-unitary authorities in England (179,753 - in 2018) and within its boundaries there are 37 active town and parish councils. Hampshire County Council are responsible for upper tier services.

Operating within the heart of the District council area is the National Park Authority established in 2005. The National Park is the planning authority for its area. In other service areas there are shared responsibilities and close collaborative working with the District council. Approximately 70% of the population of the District live in the New Forest District Council authority area in a number of

medium sized towns. To the south and east of the District border there lies 40 miles of coastline.

The broad range of organisations and community groups that exist means that the council works collaboratively with and in the community to deliver solutions.

The New Forest is home to the third largest economy in Hampshire, with a total Gross Value Added of £4.4bn. The District contains just under 8,000 businesses in total, which is more than any other local authority in Hampshire, including the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth. 89% of businesses in the District are micro in size employing fewer than 10 people. Self-employment is relatively high at over 11.6% and unemployment is consistently lower than in the rest of the country. Leisure, tourism and marine along with their associated supply chains are significant employment and economic sectors within the District. The council works closely with the New

Forest Business Partnership and 'Helping local business grow' is a priority.

Average earnings are low with 60% of the working population earning less than the UK average. This, and the high average house price, results in significant cross-commuting between those who work in the forest but can't afford to live there, and those who can afford to live within the District but work elsewhere. The District council is located between the two major conurbations of Southampton and Bournemouth.

The very special nature of the New Forest makes it an extremely attractive place to live; both for those in work and those wishing to retire (28.4% of the population is over 65). Housing development is made more difficult by many of the environmental constraints of the area.

## Community Matters

Community Matters, the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2024, focuses on the challenges faced and the plans to address them. A summary of the Community Matters can be read on page 3 of this document. It recognises the ongoing financial constraints, whilst building on the strong financial position created and sets priorities that matter to the people of the District to deliver a prosperous New Forest and put the community first.

The commitments of Community Matters are:

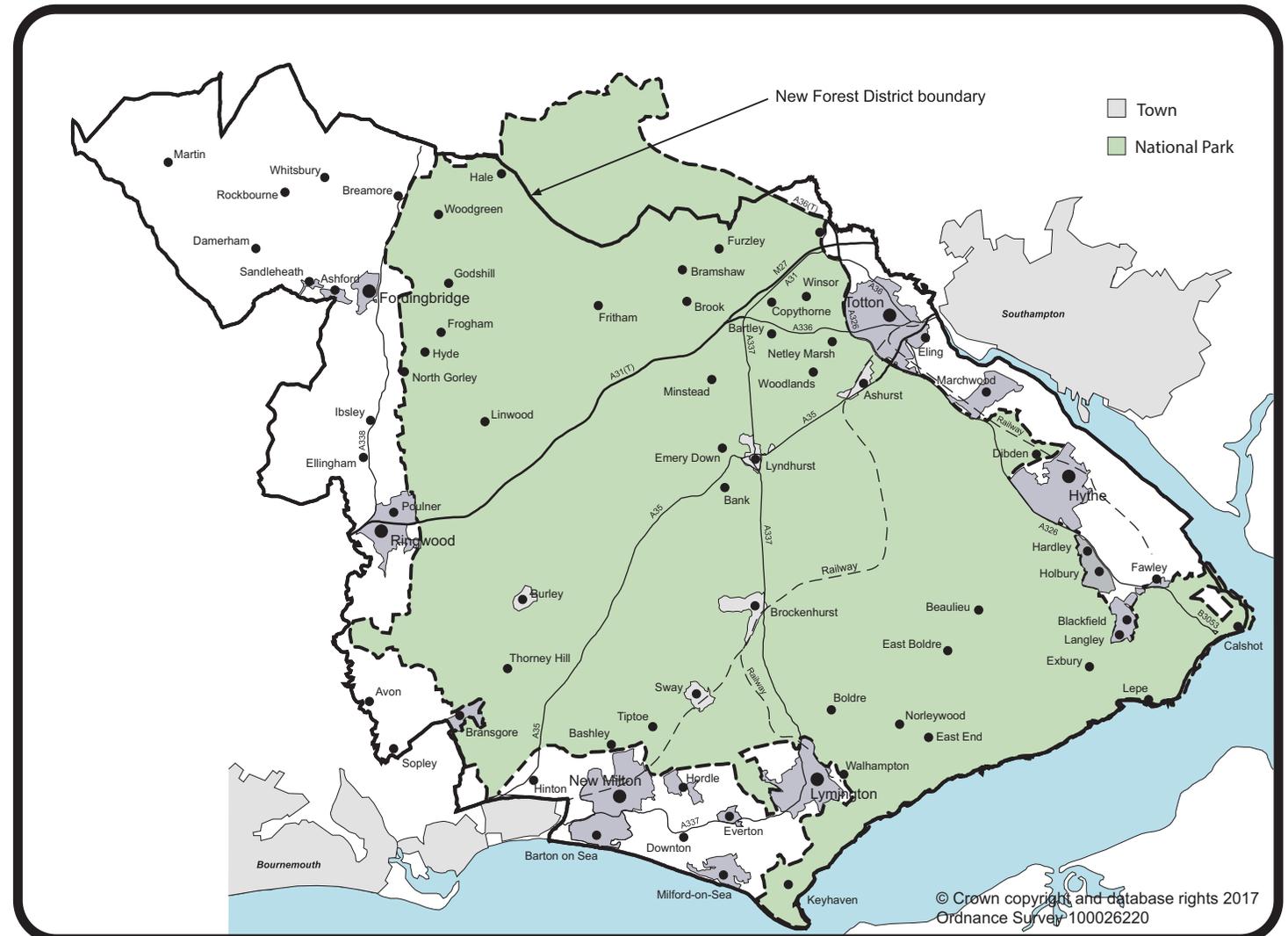
- Delivering a prosperous New Forest and putting our community first
- Encouraging development that meets local needs and enhances the special qualities of the environment
- Creating balanced communities and housing options that are affordable and sustainable
- Keeping our communities safe and listening to their needs
- Enabling service provision and ensuring value for money for the council tax payer
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our community
- Working to tackle climate change and enhancing our special environment
- Helping local businesses grow and prosper

Community Matters was approved in March 2020 and this position statement reflects the transition between the old and new corporate plan. Future performance reporting will be based on the Performance Management Framework that is under development to support the delivery of Community Matters including progress against the achievement measures set out in the plan.

In light of the Covid 19 crisis the priorities set within the Corporate Plan may need to be revisited as recovery efforts and new ways of life are established. This update reflects the plan as agreed prior to the outbreak and the achievements acknowledged before the impacts of Covid 19 were fully felt.

## Our performance highlights 2019/20

New Forest District Council is committed to tackling the accelerating impact of climate change, new approaches to providing more homes for local people, responding to the specific needs of our communities, maintaining the unique and special qualities of the environment, improving health and wellbeing and economic prosperity for the area, both now and for the future. Performance highlights for 2019/20 are considered for each Portfolio on pages 4, 5 and 6 of this position statement.



# Community Matters Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Delivering a prosperous New Forest and putting the community first

## Leader and Corporate Affairs

PORTFOLIO



- Excellence in services to our residents and continuing to maintain front line services.
- Being an employer of choice.
- Working with regional partners to ensure the prosperity of the New Forest area.
- Ensuring effective democratic engagement and representation.

## Planning and Infrastructure

PORTFOLIO



- Delivering the vision of the local plan and encouraging development that meets local needs and delivers positive, economic, social and environmental outcomes.
- Working with partners, applicants and developers to ensure a positive, timely and enabling attitude to development.
- Using contributions to deliver projects that mitigate the impact of development on the natural environment.
- Ensuring building control are engaged at the earliest stage to make future in development projects safe.
- Working with Partnership for South Hampshire authorities on a Joint Strategy and Statement of Common Ground to address future growth and unmet housing need.

## Leisure and Wellbeing

PORTFOLIO



- Working with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.
- Ensuring that public health prevention principles are embedded within core services of the council.
- Increase the levels of physical activity within the District.
- Providing affordable and accessible leisure facilities.

## Housing Services

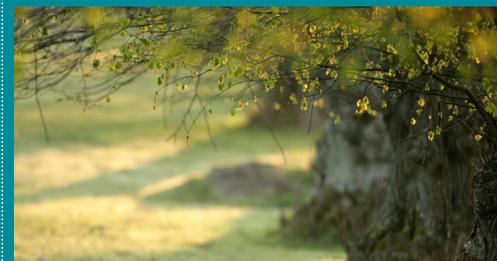
PORTFOLIO



- Meeting local housing needs and promoting sustainable growth.
- Increasing the supply of high quality affordable homes.
- Improving the housing circumstances of those most in need.
- Enabling the best use of housing to meet the needs of local people, including support for a strong high quality private rented sector.

## Environment and Regulatory Services

PORTFOLIO



- Taking actions that address the impact of climate change locally.
- Working with others to protect and enhance our natural environment.
- Reducing waste and increasing recycling.
- Ensuring regulatory services are delivered for the benefit of our residents, businesses and visitors.

## Community Affairs

PORTFOLIO



- Putting customers at the centre of what we do and how we do it.
- Modernising customer services and responding to changing needs.
- Engaging with partners and the community to inform and contribute towards wider service outcomes.
- Ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit.

## Finance, Investment and Corporate Services

PORTFOLIO



- Protecting front line services through sound financial planning, including the collection of taxation with appropriate support for individuals and businesses.
- Modernisation and innovative use of ICT to enhance operational efficiencies across all services.
- Using investments to support financial resilience and the local economy.
- Supporting the migration to universal credit.

## Economic Development

PORTFOLIO



- Continuing to work with partners and businesses to grow the New Forest economy.
- Supporting improvements in broadband and mobile connectivity.
- Helping businesses, industries and High Streets respond to social, environmental and technological changes and innovation.
- Continuing to promote the New Forest as a filming destination.

# KEY PORTFOLIO ACHIEVEMENTS 2019-20

## Leader and Corporate Affairs Portfolio

**Delivering a prosperous New Forest and putting our community first**

Development of 'Community Matters' during 2019/20 has been key to determining the strategic direction of the Council, focussed on delivering a prosperous New Forest and putting the community first. This plan will shape the way the Council operates and ensure that resources are appropriately focussed on the priorities that have been set.

Initial stages of the Electoral Review for the New Forest have been completed with submissions on Council Size and Ward Boundaries presented to the Local Authority Boundary Commission in line with the timetable set. This is likely to see councillor numbers reduce from **60 to 48 (+/-1)** and ensure effective democratic engagement, electoral equality and representation.

A comprehensive induction and training programme for Councillors following the May 2019 elections was successfully prepared and delivered and a new HR Committee established to consider workforce issues. The employee forum continued to meet every two months and is fully engaged with organisational changes. A new HR system went live during the year enabling more efficient self-service for employees and an improved candidate experience. The employee survey resulted in a return rate of just under **40%**, more than double that of the previous survey.

NFDC hosted a delivery group meeting of the Local Resilience Forum during 2019/20, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable of Hampshire Police, with all partners attending, and continued to undertake staff training to support the Council's emergency response plan.

## Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio

**Encouraging development that meets local needs and enhances the special qualities of the environment**

The independent examination of the Local Plan Review 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy took place during 2019, including two months of public hearings in the summer. The Council received the report of the Planning Inspectors in March 2020. The Inspectors found the Council's plan 'sound' subject to a small number of modifications which the Council agreed to. Formal adoption of the Plan is expected in July 2020 and the Planning Service is now fully engaged in securing the delivery of the Local Plan's proposals, including the higher levels of new housing development that are required to address the area's needs.

**1,353 valid planning applications** were received, and performance levels have risen in line with increasing Government expectations regarding the determination of these applications. The percentage of appeals allowed is low at 20 with **90 appeals** received in total.

The Planning Enforcement department received a total of **593 new cases** across the District ranging from unauthorised fences to destruction of wildlife habitats. **21 Planning Contravention Notices** were issued and **46 Requisitions** for information served. In total **11 formal Notices were served** including Stop Notices, none of which were appealed, and an injunction was successfully sought. Further cases are currently being progressed to the courts.

The Council has worked hard on developing its in-house Building Control team and has resulted in an **8%** increase of market share, with income increasing by **26%** in turn.

The modernisation of Fordingbridge car park was completed, improving the layout and has seen three electric charging points installed. A design for Brockenhurst car park has been agreed with the Parish Council and is planned to be completed in the Autumn of 2020.

## Housing Services Portfolio

**Creating balanced communities and housing options that are affordable and sustainable**

A new Allocation policy was approved, and work began to communicate with over **3,000 Housing Register applicants**. The new Policy and online system were launched in January 2020 with nearly **1,100 applicants having live applications**.

A new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy was also approved setting out the vision to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the District over the next five years. Through a successful bid to Central Government, for the second year running, we put in place a team of five Support and Outreach workers to ensure vulnerable people have the necessary practical support to sustain accommodation and access other services. The Homelessness Team received **1,812 approaches for assistance**, culminating in **1,022 homeless applications**, whilst securing **501 successful outcomes** for applicants during the year. The number of households placed into emergency accommodation remained stable at **184 households**, compared with 185 last year.

The Private Sector Housing Service underwent a comprehensive review to enable the service to deliver efficient and effective practice in the delivery of the key areas of: Disabled Facilities Grants; Housing Standards; Empty Homes; and Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation.

Following the Council's successful opening of the first temporary accommodation facility providing **six ensuite rooms** for homeless families and single people, a further unit consisting of **three individual bedrooms** in a shared facility environment was delivered. The focus of this provision is for homeless single males. Following the expansion of the housing support services, this has enabled the Council to deliver targeted support which enables clients to move on successfully either within NFDC stock or properties within the private sector. We continue to develop this much needed accommodation with the acquisition of further stock or remodelling of existing assets to provide emergency accommodation.

From January 2020, all Housing calls have been undertaken by the new Housing hub within Housing Maintenance, providing a more joined up response and better experience for tenants. **19,576 responsive repairs** were undertaken and **£5.996m capital expenditure works** were carried out, including kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, windows, doors and boiler replacements.

## Community Affairs Portfolio

Keeping our communities safe and listening to their needs

The relocation and refurbishment of the CCTV room was completed in August of 2019 with the team operating from a modernised and efficient working environment. **1,009 incidents were logged** and the capability for live monitoring and reviews of these incidents was improved through upgraded digital equipment.

Community Safety undertook community engagement surveys with over **600 residents** of the New Forest providing valuable data and informative views pertaining to the fear of crime and experiences of crime and disorder within the District. This has enabled the Community Safety Partnership to target resources and support more effectively.

**£361,500 in grants** was approved this year for 15 local not-for-profit and voluntary groups as part of the community grants scheme. A further **£86,000 was awarded** to local community organisations for capital projects. A community engagement day and skate jam was delivered in partnership with the Hampshire Police and Hampshire Fire and Rescue at Bartley Park in Totton with **over 100 participants**. The Council also coordinated an application to the Arts Council England's Creative People and Places bid to explore the development and enhancement of local communities through participation in arts and cultural activity.

A new corporate website was procured to support a better and more efficient end to end customer experience. This process is well underway with full implementation during 2020/21.

Customer Services to take over **114,740 calls** during the year with an average wait time of **80 seconds** (from January 2020, all Housing calls were undertaken by the new Housing hub within Housing Maintenance). Email enquiries remained static at **40,388**, and webchat interactions increased from **4,065 to 4,348** with satisfaction rates at **92%** for phone service, **99%** satisfied with email and **83%** satisfied with webchat interactions.

The Electoral Team successfully delivered the quadrennial District and Parish Council elections in May 2019, closely followed by the late notice European elections and the snap General Election in December for an electorate of **144,000 people**.

## Finance, Investment and Corporate Services Portfolio

Enabling service provision and ensuring value for money for the council tax payer

A balanced budget for 2019/20 was delivered on time and within the agreed parameters. Variations arising from the previous financial year end resulted in a significant amount of detailed work.

ICT delivered a range of transformative projects, including phase two of the new HR system, the delivery of a new finance system and the setting up of a new data centre and 10gb network connection, followed by the migration of over **100 virtual servers**. Smarter Working has been enabled by the rollout of **1,000 new laptops/smart devices** and the introduction of new mobile working technology. This includes Office 365 for 800 officers and elected members, Skype for Business and Always on VPN.

The Council continues to invest in commercial property in the District and purchased **2 new sites** during the financial year 2019/20. The Council has also refurbished and let part of Lymington Town Hall. In addition, the Council has incorporated a new wholly owned company to invest in residential property, which has commenced trading during 2019/20 and has **acquired 2 properties**, both of which have been let to private market tenants.

The Revenues and Benefits Service answered **64,000 calls** in 2019/20. The collection rates for Council Tax remained high at **98.69%** and **98.97%** for non-domestic rates. **93%** of Council Tax paid was by electronic means. Housing Benefit of over **£31million** was paid to **5,744 claimants** and localised Council Tax Reduction scheme of **£8.5million to 8,283 claimants** with changes in circumstances being processed quicker than the national average. The Benefits team received 2009 new claims, **65%** made electronically. The service continued to assist claimants with the welfare reform transition.

**54 fraud referrals** were investigated resulting in overpayments being identified and **33,168** invoices were processed for payment.

## Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio

Improving the health and wellbeing of our community

The procurement of a partner to operate the centres has progressed well during the year to the point of tendering the opportunity and inviting bids. Staff and customers have been fully engaged throughout the process.

In February 2019, the Council took advantage of a change in the rules on VAT exemption for sporting activities which was reflected in the budget for 2019/20. During the year two new gyms opened in Ringwood and Totton creating competition and impacting membership income. On March 18 2020 all centres closed due to Covid 19, leading to a further loss of income of over **£100,000** in March alone.

The number of fitness members remained stable for most of the year but fell to **7,738 from 8,580** by the end of the year. In contrast public swimming and swim academy performed well against target at all centres and the number of children enrolled on the swim academy staying stable at **4,600**.

The pre school at Applemore is now being operated successfully by Applemore Early years with an increase of **60%** in the number of children attending.

**995** people with long term conditions were supported back to health through our activity referral programme Active Lifestyles. The Healthy Walks programme supported by Community First and the New Forest National Park Authority continued. The programme trained and supported **43 volunteer walk** leaders with **789 recorded volunteer hours**.

Other initiatives delivered in partnership during the year included the Young Leadership Academy to develop skills in leading a range of activities within communities, the New Forest Sports Awards to celebrate grassroots sporting achievements and the launch of a youth club for young people in Calshot.

# Environment and Regulatory Services Portfolio

Working to tackle climate change and enhancing our special environment

The proportion of household waste recycled increased slightly between 2018/19 and 2019/20, from **32.9% to 33.9%** (provisional), although income received per tonne for dry mixed recyclables reduced from **£44.17 to £27.62** due to significant changes in market values for paper and cardboard. A new arrangement with The Salvation Army commenced in 2019, for a standardised approach to recycling of clothes and shoes at Council recycling centres seeing tonnages **increase by 7%**. Improved litter and recycling bin provision in our high streets continued with modern bins being fitted in Ringwood. These dual-use bins include the opportunity to recycle. The amount of residual waste (excluding recycling) decreased by around **6kg per household (hh)** to around 465kg/hh.

The Council purchased **4 electric vehicles** during 2019 as part of efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

The Corporate Tree Policy was approved and now includes a risk strategy for trees to take account of pest and disease management, with particular reference to Ash Dieback and the Oak Processionary Moth. The new cemetery at Calshot opened in September 2019 to ensuring sufficient burial capacity in the east of the District.

The Environmental Protection team investigated **1,259** service requests for nuisance, planning applications, public health funerals and private water supplies and the Air Quality Action Plan for Lyndhurst was updated, adopted and implemented.

**93% (273)** high risk food hygiene inspections were completed, with **98%** of food businesses being broadly compliant and over **344 health and safety interventions** were carried out which included visits for accident investigations, complaints and advice requests.

Safeguarding training was introduced for all new taxi drivers and existing drivers on renewal of their licence.

The Task & Finish Group report for “Funding for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Projects” was completed and investment plans for the identified projects will now be developed. Funding approval received from the Southern RFCC will enabling work to commence on development of the Horizontal Directional Drilling trials for Barton-on-Sea and the tracer study for the Hurst Spit project.

The public conveniences at Sea Road Milford were completely rebuilt and opened in time for Easter 2020.

# Economic Development Portfolio

Helping local businesses to grow and prosper

The year saw increased engagement from the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership with the delivery of wide-ranging business support and funding programmes which benefit the New Forest economy and the businesses within.

Work was undertaken to actively promote apprenticeships and upskilling in the District. This included engaging with, and promotion of, the Solent Apprenticeship Hub, and sponsorship and participation in the inaugural ‘Get Inspired’ event aimed at promoting local career opportunities to school students within the New Forest.

Mystery shopper programmes were delivered in two locations to independent businesses this year. **50** individual businesses were assessed and provided with detailed reports helping to ensure that they are suitably prepared to face challenges in the retail environment. Assessments enabled targeted training designed to meet the needs identified in their reports.

We continued to grow our relationship with Creative England to encourage filming projects in the District. During 2019/20 this project delivered **£71,000** of benefit to the local economy and the project as a whole has now delivered **£3.8million** in spend on local goods and services.

The inaugural New Forest Film Festival took place last year in association with Film: New Forest. The festival ran from 8 - 16 June, with **30+ events** and screenings across the District, and many were attended by actors and directors involved in the local filming industry who hosted Q&As. The festival and its associated events delivered economic benefit worth **£15,000** to the local economy.

During 2019/20, the EU New Forest LEADER Programme, administered by NFDC, allocated grants worth over £300,000 to support investment by small rural businesses in the New Forest. Work has commenced on delivering a new Business Portal.

Joint European Regional Development Fund bid submitted with the Isle of Wight Council (award decision pending).

# Financial planning and viability

NFDC Capital Programme for 2019/20 totalled **£25.969million**. This included **£4.8million** on investment property purchases, **£9.9million** on new Council dwellings, **£6million** on Council dwelling maintenance and **£2.1million** on disabled adaptations to people's homes as well as sums spent on vehicles and plant, ICT projects and office accommodation upgrades.

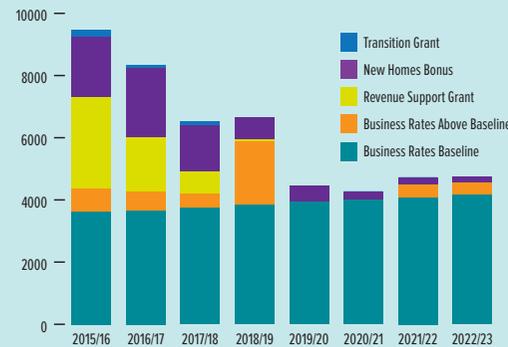
Treasury Management Investment income returns continue to grow and totalled **£1.29million** for 2019/20.

The implication of Covid 19 to the 2019/20 financial year was minor, but will have a significant impact to the Council's financial plans for 2020/21 and beyond.

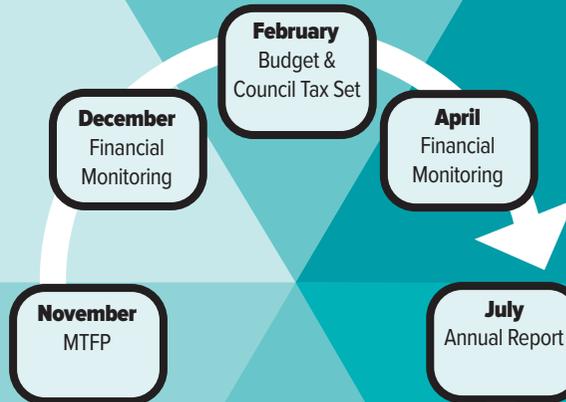
**January**  
Corporate Overview Panel

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>Council Tax per Band D - £</b>	155.76	155.76	158.36	163.36	168.36	173.36	178.36
<b>Annual % change</b>		0.0%	1.7%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	2.9%

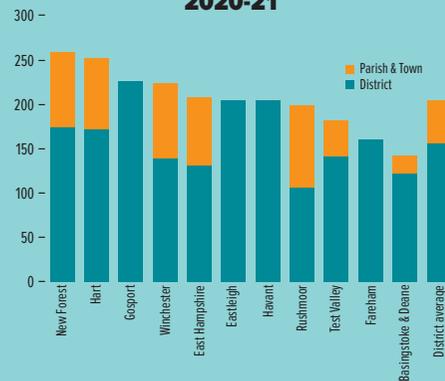
## Government Determined Resources



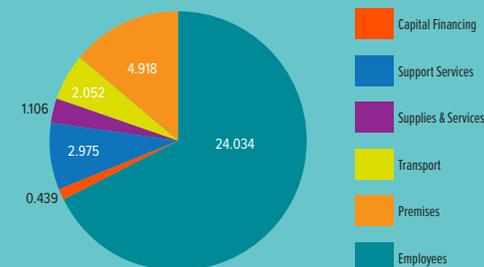
## General fund budget - £m



## Band D Council Tax: Hampshire Districts & Parish/Town 2020-21



## Budgeted Expenditure 2020/21 (£'000) (Exc. Housing Bns)



	Savings	New Req.	Rephasing	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Original Budget April 2019/20</b>				<b>17,493</b>
Variations agreed in September	0	230	353	583
Transfer from Reserves in September	0	0	-353	-353
Variations agreed in December	-343	745	-255	147
Transfer from Reserves in December			255	255
<b>Variations - Outturn</b>	<b>-1,420</b>	<b>1,648</b>	<b>-384</b>	<b>-156</b>
Transfer from Reserves - Outturn	-216	-209		-425
Transfer to Reserves - Outturn			384	384
<b>Provisional Outturn 31-03-20</b>				<b>17,928</b>

**October**  
Budget Task & Finish Group

**September**  
Corporate Overview Panel

# ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Member Task & Finish groups report to Overview & Scrutiny panels on significant projects and processes

**Budget** (annually) **Citizens Advice**  
**Council Tax Reduction**  
 Customer **Community Grants**  
 (annually) **Electoral Review** **Health and Leisure**  
 Private Sector Housing **Waste Strategy**

## Communications

Regular Chief Executive messages to all staff, staff briefings, communications bulletins and employee forum

## Important documents

[Annual Governance Statement](#)

[Constitution](#)

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)

[Annual Audit Letter](#)

[Organisational Strategy](#)

[Organisational Structure](#)

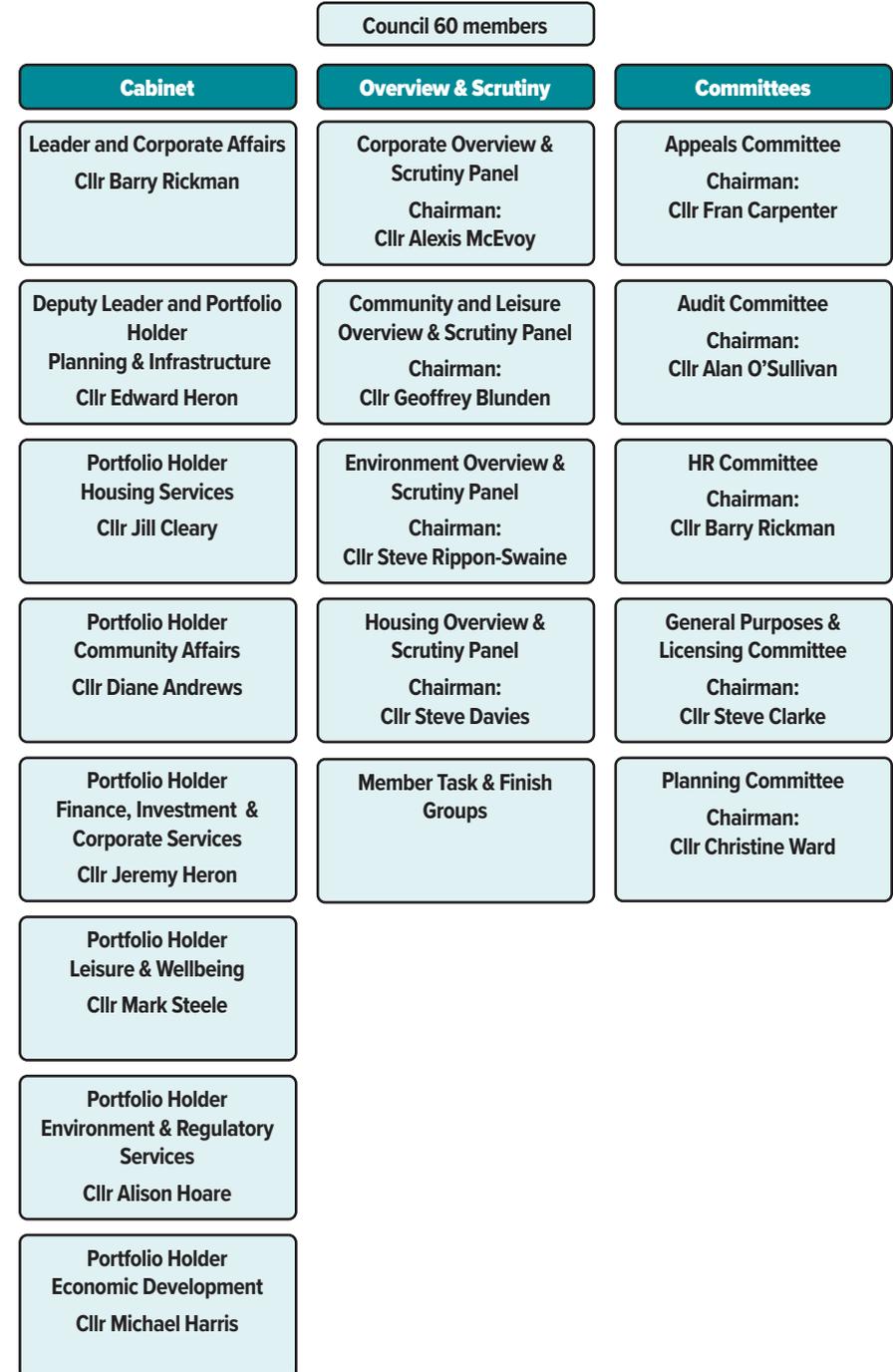
[Democratic Structure](#)

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Informal Engagement Cabinet/EMT

## DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE



# LEADERSHIP OF PLACE

## PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Provided to **HR (NPA) Financial Services and Internal Audit (NPA) Customer Services (Hythe PC) Traffic Management (HCC) Grounds Maintenance (various)**

Provided from **Treasury Management (HCC) Customer Services (Totton TC, Fordingbridge PC, Fawley PC)**

**Internal Audit (Southern Internal Audit Partnership) Planning Trees and Conservation (NPA)**

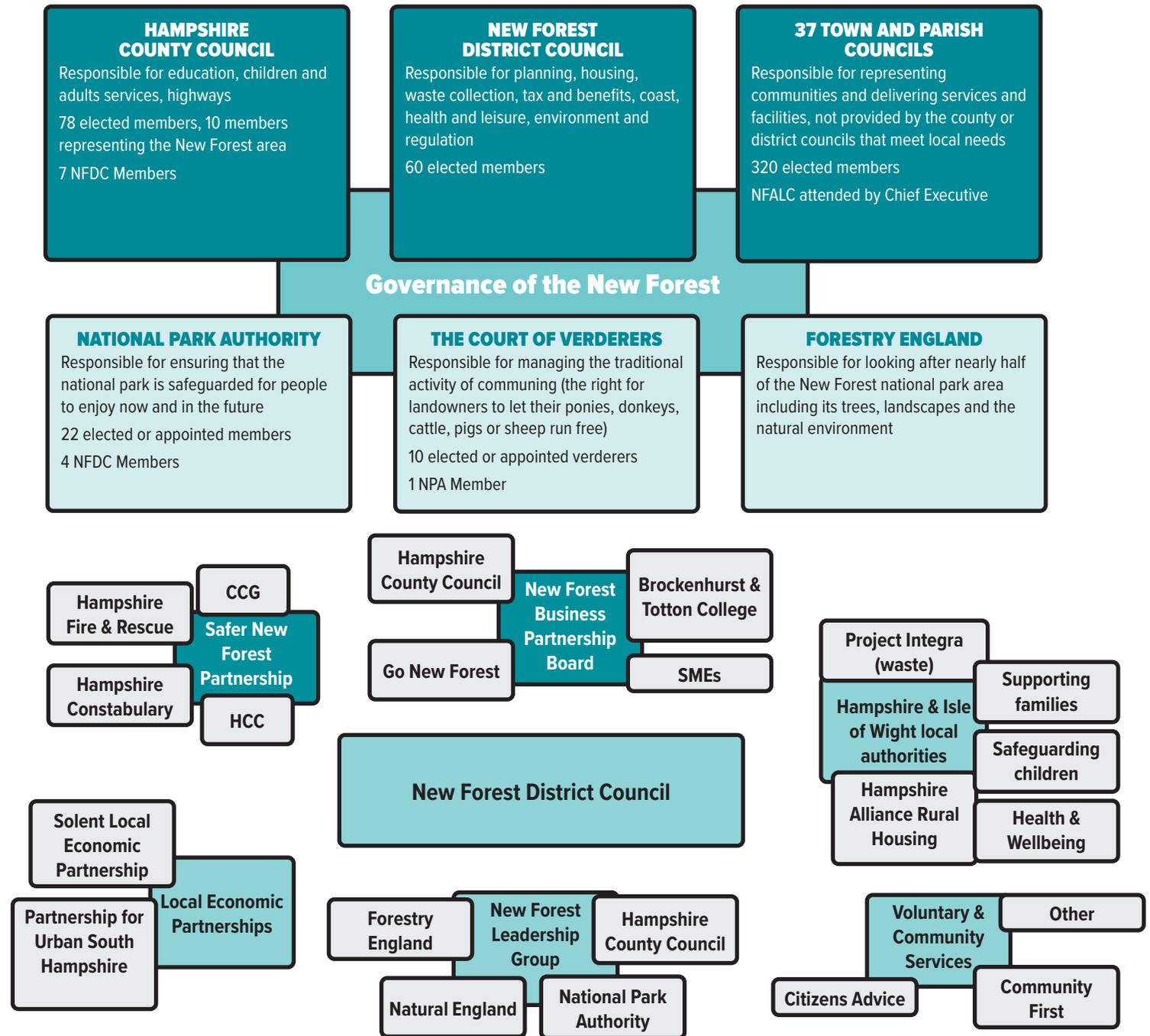
Private/public **Dibden Golf Centre**

Shared projects

Based at the **channel coastal observatory** we are the lead authority for the regional coastal monitoring programmes. Directly managing the south east region and co-ordinating the programmes for the entire English coastline (six regions) including funding bids of £23million to 2021. Key partners include Environment Agency, Canterbury, Worthing & Havant Councils to deliver the programme. NPA Partnership Plan

Ringwood Gateway  
Community Grants **awarded £361,500**

Government partnerships  
**Disabled facility grant and community housing funding**



# Key Performance Measures

Non Domestic Rates - gross rateable value	TARGET NA	2019/20 £171.909m	2018/19 £169.863m
Business count	TARGET NA	2019/20 8,055	2018/19 7,905
Successful homeless prevention outcomes	TARGET NA	2019/20 63%	2018/19 58%
Total number of additional homes	TARGET NA	2019/20 308	2018/19 359
Completed high risk food hygiene inspections	TARGET above 95%	2019/20 93%*	2018/19 98%
Residual household waste per household	TARGET below 465kgs	2019/20 465kg	2018/19 472kg
Amount sent for reuse, recycling and composting	TARGET above 35%	2019/20 33.9%	2018/19 32.9%
Processing of major planning applications within 13 weeks	TARGET above 90%	2019/20 92%	2018/19 96.31%
Council tax percentage collected	TARGET above 98.9%	2019/20 98.69%	2018/19 98.97%
Median Gender Pay Gap	NATIONAL AVERAGE 17.3%**	2019/20 0%	2018/19*** -6.12% (-65p)

\* This lower level is due to Covid19 affecting the end of March which restricted the inspections completed at the end of the financial year.

\*\* According to The Office of National Statistics employers had until 31 March to submit their data but due to Covid19 this has been extended and once all data is collected the 17.3% above may change.

\*\*\* Percentage represents the difference between the average of men and women's pay. A negative figure represents the female average being higher.