

POSITION STATEMENT 2021

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



Foreword from the Leader of New Forest District Council



2020/21 has been dominated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The impact on all communities could never have been envisaged when plans and budgets were first agreed.

Many services had to be halted - some for the whole year, some in part - as we moved in and out of lockdowns. The impact on our wide

range of services has been varied as they all faced different circumstances and challenges.

Some of our frontline services, such as waste & recycling collection, continued throughout the pandemic, ensuring they followed social distancing guidelines, but at a cost that had not been budgeted for.

Our Health and Leisure Centres were closed for most of the year with staff on furlough. This created a significant budget cost as well as impacting the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Our 350 office-based staff were predominately working from home. Many were performing new tasks - like our Revenue & Benefits teams that distributed over £60 million of business support grants - or working in the community undertaking new roles like our Environmental Health teams that were undertaking Covid-19 work for Public Health England and not carrying out normal business inspections as premises were closed.

New Covid-19 services had to be delivered, like the Local Response Centre established to support those most vulnerable in our community. This service was set up rapidly,

using staff from all areas of the Council, including Elections, Coastal, Car Parking and Health and Leisure.

Some of our usual services, like Housing Estates Management and Homelessness saw their workload increase significantly.

The following annual report tries to identify how we have got on delivering services during the pandemic. To help understanding, Covid-19 impact on services has been flagged and a traffic light system provided to indicate general performance.

Overall, the Council has done remarkably well thanks to the efforts and dedication of staff from across our services. The investment in ICT enabled many services to carry on as it enabled office-based staff to deliver through home working. The budget position has been maintained with the help of approximately £8 million of central government grants. Service performance, where it has been able to continue, has been largely unaffected despite a significant increase in staff absences created by self-isolating and Covid-19.

Looking ahead there are some areas that will come under more pressure. Environmental Health teams face a backlog of inspection work, the Housing Estates Management team face resolving many neighbourhood issues that arose, and the budget will face pressure from rising costs, particularly housing materials. The wellbeing of staff will remain a priority. Monitoring our performance and achievement has never been more important. I hope you find the reports of my portfolio holders interesting on a year like no other.

Edward Heron

Leader of New Forest District Council

Introduction

The New Forest

The New Forest is an area of southern England which includes one of the largest remaining tracts of unenclosed pastureland, heathland, and forest in the heavily populated south east. It is a unique place of history, wildlife and 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) and 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 1,000 years. Many of the historical agricultural practices are still retained overseen by the Verderers. The most significant of these is the depasturing of ponies, cattle, pigs and donkeys in the open forest by authorised inhabitants known as Commoners.

The District Council was created on 1 April 1974 and is one of the most populated non-unitary authorities in England (179,753 - in 2018). Within its boundaries there are 37 active town and parish councils.

Hampshire County Council are responsible for upper tier services and operating within the heart of the District Council area is the National Park Authority (NPA) established in

2005. The NPA is the planning authority for its area, and other services share responsibilities and work in close collaboration with New Forest District Council.

Approximately 70% of the population of the district live in the New Forest District Council authority area in several 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.

At the start of 2020 the New Forest was home to the third largest economy in Hampshire, with a total Gross Value Added of £4.4bn. The district contained just under 8,000 businesses in total. Leisure, tourism and marine along with their associated supply chains are significant employment and economic sectors within the district.

The very special nature of the New Forest, coupled with its excellent transport connections to the rest of the UK and to Europe, 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 and performance 2020/21

Community Matters, the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2024, sets out the overarching commitments and vision for the Council and focuses on the challenges faced and the plans to address them. A summary of Community Matters can be read on page 4 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.

Although Community Matters was only approved in March 2020, the Council had to respond and adapt to unprecedented events which altered priorities during the year that followed. Critical services were all maintained with some areas more significantly disrupted or experiencing new pressures in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of office-based staff worked remotely throughout the entire year, and members meetings moved online. Staff were redeployed, and new tasks and responsibilities were delivered including the Local Response Centre to support those under the Government's shielding measures, additional homelessness support during the pandemic, paying business support grants, administering self-isolation payments, supporting public health and enabling businesses to reopen or trade safely, and encouraging social distancing and Covid-19 safe behaviour. Page 5 of this document summarises the Council's response to Coronavirus pandemic.

As such the Coronavirus pandemic dominates the Council's performance for 2020/21, its service delivery and the impact on the community.

This annual performance statement is a backward-looking document that serves to reflect upon the performance of each Portfolio outlined in the Corporate Plan for 2020/21, whilst acknowledging the necessary redirecting of resources to deal with the more immediate response to the Coronavirus crisis.

Performance Summary

A summary of the performance for each Portfolio is accompanied by an assessment of the performance of key service areas, supported by relevant performance indicators. This considers:

- 1) **Staffing** - the availability of staff over the past year, factoring in absences as a direct result of Covid-19, including self-isolation and shielding, and re-deployment where the resources have been needed elsewhere;
- 2) **Budget** - the impact on costs and income; and
- 3) **Service delivery impact** - the impact on the overall delivery of services to the public.

The assessment of performance is shown as red amber or green which represent the following:

● significant impact ● slight impact ● as planned

Where services have been unable to deliver their existing functions because of new Covid-19 responsibilities then an assessment has been made of the performance of these existing functions and of the new responsibilities.

In light of the impact of the pandemic, and the changes to Portfolios, Community Matters 2020-2024 will now be revisited to ensure that priorities continue to reflect the needs of the community, to update associated actions and to align responsibilities with the new Cabinet structure.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

CUSTOMER SERVICES

78,985 CALLS
39,557 EMAILS
5,136 CHATS



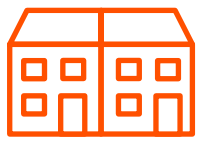
VIRTUAL MEETINGS

70+ COUNCILLOR MEETINGS VIEWED
8,950+ TIMES ON YOUTUBE



BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANTS

£67.6m TO **4,500+** BUSINESSES

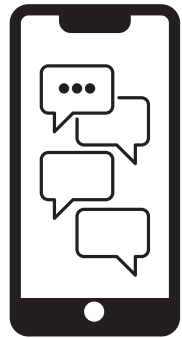


HOUSING

1,600 HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING ADVICE REQUESTS

207 HOUSEHOLDS PLACED INTO COVID-19 SECURE ACCOMMODATION

358 SOCIAL HOUSING PROPERTIES RELET



SOCIAL MEDIA

186 POSTS PER MONTH
6 MILLION+ REACHED



TAX AND BENEFITS RELIEF

56,000+ COUNCIL TAX, BENEFITS AND BUSINESS RATES SUPPORT CALLS

615 PEOPLE HELPED BY **£367,000** DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

4,000 PEOPLE HELPED TO PAY THEIR COUNCIL TAX

£127,000 OF COMMUNITY GRANTS

9 NEW FOOD LARDERS SUPPORTED

WEBSITE

50,000+ CORONAVIRUS PAGE VIEWS
2,000 IN ONE DAY



NEW FOREST.GOV.UK



WASTE AND RECYCLING

COLLECTED FROM **22,000** HOUSEHOLDS EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK
RUBBISH INCREASED BY AROUND **10%**

LOCAL RESPONSE HUB



1,494 REFERRALS FOR SUPPORT

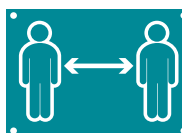
60 WELFARE CHECKS

1,182 FOOD PARCELS PACKAGED AND DELIVERED

£10,000 IN EMERGENCY GRANTS

SOCIAL DISTANCING SIGNAGE

430 SIGNS ERECTED



122 JOBS RECRUITED

6,051 BUILDING CONTROL INSPECTIONS

42,356 APPLE TREE CARELINE ACTIVATIONS

63 SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS

3,858 GAS SAFETY CHECKS

131 BONFIRE COMPLAINTS

Leader and Corporate Affairs

Delivering a prosperous New Forest and putting our community first

The response to the pandemic became the priority for 2020/21 despite the strategic direction set out in Community Matters. The continued commitment to delivering modernised and innovative services and putting the community first was at the centre of this response.

Enabling office-based staff to work from home throughout much of the year was instrumental in the continued delivery of many services, with Appletree Court remaining open for essential reasons only. Engaging with staff and ensuring their wellbeing through this challenging time was a key focus and along with two staff surveys, steps were taken to support individuals with the appropriate ICT equipment to effectively work from home and in providing information and training to support employees' mental health.

Member meetings were also moved online, allowing the continuation of the democratic process throughout, with Members being supported with the appropriate technology so that they could engage in these meetings.

Recruitment into vacant positions continued with **122 vacancies** filled during the year, and the HR team were successful in their application for **18 placements** on the Government Kickstart Scheme, providing funding for the creation of new jobs for 16 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit. Five placements have already been filled.

During the year, four Covid-19 Recovery Task and Finish Groups were set up to assess the impact on the Council's finances and resources, the local economy and the community, each reporting recommendations back to the Cabinet to help determine future recovery plans.

A significant contribution to the Portfolio's priority to work with regional partners to ensure the prosperity of the New Forest area was demonstrated in the Council's support for the **£2 billion** Solent Local Enterprise Partnership Freeport Bid, approved by the Chancellor in March. This will help strengthen the local position and rebuild the economy attracting much needed investment into the area.

The Council submitted its Council Size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in October 2019, recommending a reduction in the number of councillors which was consequently agreed at **48**, down from 60. The Council went on to submit warding pattern proposals in February 2020. Following the publication of Draft Recommendations by the LGBCE, the Council responded to the consultation process in September 2020. In January 2021, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England published final recommendations for a Council Size of **48**, with new ward boundaries. These will be implemented at the 2023 elections.

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Vacancies filled first time	%	↑	-	83%	94%	↑
Sick days per FTE	Num	↓	-	8.66	5.81	↓
Total sick days	Num	↓	-	6,567	4,579	↓
Covid-19 absence per FTE	Num	-	-	-	9.88	-
Covid-19 total absence days	Num	-	-	-	7,783	-

Planning and Infrastructure

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

Despite the pandemic, Building Control and Planning services were delivered throughout 2020/21. This included **14 virtual Planning Committee** meetings, the start of a procurement project to upgrade the IT system to deliver a more efficient customer friendly experience and dealing with over **1,000 calls** in to the Planning department per month. A virtual Waterside Conference took place in January and the Vision for the Waterside was launched. A review of all supplementary planning documents also commenced with the Parking and Mitigation of Recreational Impact documents which will make it easier for developers to engage with the planning process. The pre-application service has been redesigned, this includes the introduction of a virtual duty officer services which is proving very popular with customers and staff. Work has now commenced on Local Plan Part 2 which includes workstreams, amongst other matters, relating to Climate Change and Green Infrastructure.

Delivering the vision of the local plan and encouraging development that meets local needs and delivers positive economic, social and environmental outcomes remains a priority. The number of new planning applications received during the year remained steady with **1,433 applications** (1,437 2019/20) although the number of planning decisions made fell slightly by **5% to 1,280**. Whilst performance on the time taken to determine planning applications has remained good for smaller applications there has been a drop in performance on major applications, a series of actions are being taken to address this issue. July, a number of the strategic sites have come forward as applications and pre-application enquiries.

Building control market share fell to **44%** in May 2020 but recovered and rose to **58%** by January 2021, an overall increase of 9% since January 2019 which was a positive position given the lockdown restrictions at the time. At a virtual planning committee, members resolved to grant planning permission for a new sustainable community and centre of marine and maritime innovation at the former Fawley Power Station, the largest brownfield regeneration project in the South of England.

New Forest District Council are also one of the first Councils in the UK to require biodiversity net gain on all new development plans

and are supporting landowners to identify potential additional projects.

Working with Hampshire County Council, the service has developed a Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan for the Waterside recognising the important role cycling and walking plays in addressing the impact of climate change and promoting the health and wellbeing of residents. Work now continues on a joint Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan for the rest of the district working with HCC, the NPA and Forestry England. This document will enable funding applications and secure project delivery for the future.

Green infrastructure projects have been delivered, including both the Sweatford Water and Poulner Lakes projects to enable the enhancement of informal open space to create safer pedestrian routes, improve accessibility and enhance biodiversity.

Car park charges were suspended during the initial lockdown and usage was subsequently impacted throughout the whole year as a result of further lockdowns and national restrictions. The Portfolio lost revenue of approximately £1m as a direct result. The parking enforcement team were redeployed, in part, to support the delivery of food parcels to individuals.

Performance Summary

Development Control	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Planning Policy	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Building Control	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Parking*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Increase in the number of houses completed each year (as set out in the Annual Authority Monitoring Report)	Num	↑	300	308	Expected July	-
Increase in the number of mitigation projects delivered each year	Num	↑	3	3	3	→
Total amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spent	%	↑	35%	6%	5%	↓
Increase in the total amount of open space play and sport provision, and cycling and walking infrastructure delivered each year	Projects	↑	5 projects	4 projects	4 projects	→
Increase in NFDC Building Control Market Share	%	↑	65%	54%	55%	↑

Housing Services

Creating balanced communities and housing options that are affordable and sustainable

The Housing teams continued to work towards the strategic objectives set out on the Housing Strategy whilst responding to additional impacts and pressures due to the Covid pandemic.

During the first 6 months of the pandemic, the Homelessness Team provided safe accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness, helping **130 households** as part of the government's "everyone in" campaign. The additional costs were offset by **£800,000** in government funding to support vulnerable homeless people. **207 households** were offered emergency temporary accommodation during the year and, at the height of the pandemic, over **85 households** were in external emergency temporary accommodation, many with complex needs. These households were supported with food, transport, benefit claims and referrals to specialist agencies by the Housing Support Team, funded by a successful bid to MHCLG. The scale of the increase in homelessness at this time had an impact on the medium term aspiration to minimise the use of external B & B accommodation.

Over **49%** of applicants presenting themselves as threatened with homelessness were prevented from becoming homeless with **267 households** securing alternative accommodation.

In total the Homelessness Team received **1,600 approaches** for assistance, awarding **1,004** statutory duties to help secure accommodation and successfully secured accommodation for **524 households**.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the Allocations Team relet **358** social housing properties during the year for all registered providers in the district, including **292** council properties.

Throughout the lockdown periods many of our tenants were affected financially as rent arrears increased by over **40%**. The Tenancy Account Team supported many tenants to seek financial advice, help with Universal Credit Claims and provided the reassurance and time to tenants to help resolve their situations. By the year end, arrears were **back in line** with performance targets.

The priority of increasing the provision of temporary accommodation continued at a pace with major works completing on a further **18 additional units, whilst another 13** are due to finish in 2021/22, offering an improved alternative to external B&B accommodation.

During the year a total of **190 new affordable homes** were provided across the New Forest; with **64** delivered by the District Council and contributing to the Corporate Plan target of 600 additional homes by 2026. 2020/21 also saw the first pair of new-build properties acquired and sold for **shared ownership**, with many more planned for the future.

And, as part of the Government's initiative to help Rough Sleepers, the Council competitively secured capital and revenue funding to set-up and support a **specialist accommodation scheme** which was delivered by the year end.

Lockdown restrictions meant that access to people's homes had to be carefully considered for planned and reactive maintenance services and disabled adaptations in order to prioritise safety. Resources were focussed on emergency repairs and essential maintenance and a two-stage screening process was implemented

for appointments to ensure individuals weren't symptomatic, self-isolating or shielding before work commenced. Work to deal with the backlog of non-essential repairs was ongoing throughout the year and continues.

From January 2021 maintenance services were re-prioritised to deal with the backlog in empty properties, which had increased during the year due to difficulties in sourcing materials, social distancing rules, and whilst resources were directed to essential maintenance work. External subcontractors were appointed to assist with turning around empty properties faster. This resulted in increased costs but rent income on such properties helped to offset some of the costs. It is anticipated that this backlog will be fully addressed during 2021/22.

The capital maintenance programme was delayed at the start of the year due to the lockdown restrictions, although with the easing of these restrictions in the summer, the programme was restarted which meant that the programme was not significantly impacted with **236 bathroom or kitchen modernisations** completed (246 for 2019/20).

Despite the pandemic, safety inspections were maintained during the year and measures were put in place to protect and reassure tenants and staff. **3,858 gas safety inspections** were undertaken during 2020/21, in line with previous years. Access to a small percentage of properties was challenging due to tenants self-isolating or being reluctant to have trade staff in their homes.

During the height of the pandemic, Housing Estates Management dealt with an increased volume of neighbourhood complaints and disputes, with follow up investigations, visits and mediation required. Between March and August 2020, the team responded to **407 separate neighbour complaints** compared with 123 for the same period the previous year. To manage the significant increase in these cases, the demand for lettings, and in recognition of local lockdown restrictions, the team shifted resources from estate and property inspections and in-person tenancy sign ups, to deal with the increase in neighbour disputes. Despite this, the team were still able to deliver **349 remote sign ups** of new tenants and temporary accommodation applicants during the financial year.

The Portfolio was successful in bidding for over **£250,000 of government funding to provide energy efficient heating upgrades** to homes of tenants on lower incomes with support from the **Greener Housing Task and Finish Group**. Plans also include a proposal to provide a greener housing scheme at the former Testwood Social Club site in Totton, to include the installation of air source heat pumps and triple glazing.

The new Private Sector Housing Strategy was approved by Council in December 2020, and a new bespoke software system was developed and implemented to help deliver new strategic actions. The Team prioritised disabled adaptations post lockdowns and completed works to the value of **£1.2m**.

The Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) switched to digital meetings and continued to scrutinise performance and processes, developing new ways to hold the service to account ahead of fundamental changes to landlord governance in the next 2 years.

Housing Services

Performance Summary

Housing Estate Management*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Housing Register Management and Allocations	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Homelessness*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Housing Repairs and Maintenance*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Additional council affordable homes by April 2026	Num	↑	600 (2026)	90 (147)	64 (211)	↑
Increase in prevention Duty cases successfully prevented	%	↑	60%	61%	49%	↓
Net increase in the number of private sector lease properties	Num	↑	140	138	141	↑
Increase in rough sleepers entering accommodation pathway	Num	↑	Monitor	31	62	↑
Reduction in the number of Households in external emergency B&B accommodation at year end	Num	↓	30	43	69	↑

Community Affairs

Keeping our communities safe and listening to their needs

As an essential service, Appletree Careline have maintained 24-hour service delivery, responding to **42,356** calls during this period in line with the previous year. As part of the Control Room, the team have also handled **2,501 Out of Hours emergency enquiries**, including calls for Covid-19 related support.

In response to Covid-19, a Local Response Centre was established in March 2020 providing support to people under the Government’s shielding measures, and other vulnerable members of the community. Scheduled elections for May 2020 were postponed and the elections team, along with other officers, was redeployed, in part, to set up and run the Local Response Centre (LRC). The LRC, in partnership with Community First, responded to **1,494 referrals** for support with food, prescription collection and social isolation as well as directly distributing **1,182 food parcels** from the Food Hub at Applemore Health & Leisure Centre. The response involved staff from across the organisation handling and making phone calls, providing reassurance and supporting independence, identifying local food offerings, shopping for essential food items, boxing and delivering food parcels and making over **60 welfare checks** to the homes of vulnerable individuals. Lymington Basics Bank took over the preparing of food parcels on behalf of the LRC from June, as the Leisure centres reopened, until shielding was paused at the beginning of August. The CCTV and Appletree Careline team took on the handling of referrals from December 2020.

Partnership working with town and parish councils, Hampshire County Council and the voluntary sector was instrumental to the pandemic response in supporting the needs, and recovery efforts, within the community. Along with the **£116,000** in revenue grants and **£97,650** in capital grants paid during the year, around **£10,000** in small grants to local voluntary organisations was distributed to assist in providing emergency support to those most vulnerable. Members grants were increased to **£1,000** to further support local community efforts.

The Community Covid-19 Recovery Task and Finish Group met with community and voluntary organisations to better understand the impact of the pandemic and to identify the actions required for recovery.

The reformed approach to the annual electoral canvass was still able to be delivered, with the revised electoral register published on 1 December 2020.

Modernising service delivery progressed with the Council’s new website, launched in July 2020, enabling greater digital service delivery with an easy to use design for customers. Since the launch, and up until end of March 2021, there were over **1million page views** and more services are now available online. The new website provided an alternative to some face-to-face contacts which were unavailable during the lockdown closures of the local information offices and **15,000 parking clock applications** were made online during this time. Staff from the Information Offices moved to working from home supporting Customer Services by taking calls. Phased re-opening of the information offices was brought in to support essential services.

Customer services, all working remotely throughout the year, also saw increased demand with calls up by **4% to 78,985**, emails up by **9.5% to 39,557** and webchat contacts of **5,136**, an increase of 21% on the previous year. There was a 63% increase in garden waste calls in response to a significant uplift in demand for the service.

Providing timely and accurate information to residents was a key strategy in the Council’s Covid-19 approach and a regular weekly resident’s email was introduced in direct response to the pandemic. This communication now has over **14,200 subscribers**, who, in a recent survey rated this service 9 out of 10 for usefulness, relevance and how easy the information was to understand. This communication was further enhanced by dedicated Coronavirus webpages providing information and signposting to guidance and available support. In total these pages have received over **50,000 page views**, with a **peak of 2,000 in one day** (the most of any single page).

Alongside our partners within Hampshire Constabulary and Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service our Community Safety team undertook five dedicated days to engage and listen to residents’ views across the district. Due to the pandemic the partnership held a community safety webinar online in November 2020 joined by 100+ delegates from services across the district area.

In a resident engagement survey, **96% of residents** asked were either satisfied or very satisfied with the area they live in regarding crime, disorder, or anti-social behaviour.

Priority was given to supporting those at risk from domestic abuse with the continuation of the Domestic Abuse forum with partner agencies, and regular communications highlighting help available for those affected. In November the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership supported 16 Days of Action reminding people of services available and releasing different messages each day to different target audiences. A staff policy was also published directed at employees affected by domestic abuse with training sessions for staff. Helpline information was displayed on refuse vehicles and sacks.

63 safeguarding referrals were received during the year.

Performance Summary

Customer Services and Information Offices*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Electoral Services*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
CCTV & Appletree Careline	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Community Affairs

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Number of engagement activities (Community Safety)	Num	↑	5	5	5	→
Residents satisfaction survey re: crime and disorder	%	↑	95	96	96	→

Finance, Investment and Corporate Services

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

Soon after the budget was set for 2020/21 the pandemic caused a significant adverse impact on the Council's projected income, resulting in a need for the Council to revise its spending plans and restate a balanced budget for the year. An emergency budget was set and approved in September 2020.

The closure of the Health and Leisure Centres had the biggest financial impact with lost income totalling approximately **£6m**. Government support of £5.2m offset much of this loss, including use of the furlough scheme for around **400 members of staff**.

The Covid-19 Recovery Finance and Resources Task and Finish Group was set up to review the financial impact as the situation developed and were instrumental in making recommendations to Cabinet on the necessary mitigating actions.

Measures put in place in response to the financial pressures included the review of asset maintenance budgets, revised Capital Programme Financing and reserve transfers, and a complete and thorough review of service budgets to account for savings and allow for expenditure increases as a direct impact of Covid-19. Measures were also implemented to control employee costs by adopting a Vacancy Control procedure to ensure only essential staffing posts were filled, including considerations for redeployment of existing staff where roles have been impacted by Covid-19. HR provided additional support to managers and staff on wellbeing, self isolation and furlough, they saw a reduction in recruitment during the year.

Government funding support subsequently eased much of the pressure. The existing strong financial position enabled the Council to respond well and reformulate its financial strategy to ensure future plans are sustainable and resilient.

Revenues and Benefits administered in excess of **£60m** worth of business support grants and **£28m** in business rate discounts to businesses who suffered as a result of the closure and reduced trade, whilst offering over **£700,000** in Council tax relief to assist individuals and families in financial hardship. Additional responsibilities also extended to the administration of self-isolation payments, whilst providing business as usual services.

Three more employment properties were acquired during the year within the district. The Crow Lane Ringwood development

was progressed with the appointment of technical advisors and letting consultants, and the procurement process for contractors commenced. The lettings for the Lymington Town Hall south wing were delivered including the completion of the Police station on the ground floor. These investments will continue to support the Council's financial resilience.

As at 31 March 2021, Appletree Property Lettings have purchased seven properties with offers accepted on a further two. Seven of these properties have been let. The roll out of the Commercial Property Investment and the Residential Property Investment strategies has been affected by Covid-19, especially in the early stages of the financial year.

The pandemic highlighted the value of the investment in, and modernisation of, ICT, which positioned the Council well to respond by working in alternative ways, particularly the ability for office-based staff to work from home at very short notice. Virtual meetings were also enabled within a very quick time frame and any members whose existing equipment wasn't appropriate were provided with new equipment to enable their continued participation in meetings. ICT effectively supported the workforce remotely throughout the year, along with HR and other corporate services.

Performance Summary

Financial Services	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Revenues and Benefits*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Estates and Valuation	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
HR*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
ICT*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Annual Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Maintain high level of Council Tax collected	%	↑	98.24%	98.69%	98.31%	↓
NNDR collected	%	↑	98.19%	98.97%	97.79%	↓
Increase the value of commercial investment	£M	↑	20	9	9.887 spend altogether	↑
Increase the value of residential investment	£M	↑	4	1.43	2.08	↑
Availability of NFDC Website	%	↑	100%	100%	100%	→

Leisure and Wellbeing

Improving the health and wellbeing of our community

This portfolio saw the biggest impact of the pandemic on service delivery with the closure of the Health and Leisure Centres, and just under **400 staff furloughed** throughout most of 2020/21. The remaining staff were retained to maintain plant and buildings and support other services of the Council, including the Local Response Centre providing a food hub from Applemore Health & Leisure centre and the distribution of food parcels to those who needed them.

The financial impact on the Portfolio was also significant. The closure of the Health and Leisure Centres resulted in lost income totalling approximately **£6m** (86% of the original budget), although **£5.2m** of this loss will be covered through government support.

The Health and Leisure recovery plan ensured that when centres could reopen in line with government guidelines, they could do so in a Covid-19 secure manner including one-way systems, maintaining social distancing requirements, increasing cleaning regimes in all the facilities, reconfiguration of gyms to allow 2m distancing, closing some facilities such as showers, and making sanitisation stations available in all public and staff areas.

The centres, with support of leisure staff, have also been used as Covid-19 vaccination and testing sites. The Lateral Flow Test Community Covid-19 Test Centre, based at Totton Health & Leisure centre, was operated 6 days a week for 6 weeks. **1,441 tests** were carried out during that time.

Despite the pandemic, the review of Health and Leisure concluded, with a partnership with Freedom Leisure announced in February 2021. This will not only help to sustain the service but also to increase participation and improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

The quarterly meetings of the Health and Wellbeing board were suspended and did not take place due to the pandemic. The partners of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Public Health Hampshire, West Hampshire CCG, the voluntary sector and NFDC) worked together to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting the most vulnerable residents during this time. The impact of the pandemic on widening the existing health inequalities will be reflected in recovery planning.

This year's Active Lives report showed that inactivity levels sat at **19.5%** to May 2020, with **65.4%** of New Forest adults and **53.3%** of children reporting being physically active, however the impacts of the pandemic on physical activity will not be known until the next bi-annual report. This is an area that will also need to be kept under review as part of the recovery activities.

Performance Summary

Health & Leisure*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Dibden Golf Centre*	Staffing	NA
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Sports and Community Development*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Increase in physical activity in adults	%	↑	Monitor	-	65.4%	-
Increase in physical activity in children	%	↑	Monitor	-	53.3%	-
Reduction in inactivity levels	%	↓	Monitor	-	19.5%	-

Environment and Regulatory Services

Working to tackle climate change and enhancing our special environment

Taking action to address the impact of climate change remains a long term key priority and there are numerous workstreams across the council to address this issue. Work on the Environment Strategy was delayed due to other priorities, further consideration will be given to what needs to be included in the Environment Strategy that is not covered in other workstreams.

Despite the impact of the pandemic the Waste and Recycling service maintained weekly collections to the 22,000 households in the district. The Council collected over **63,000** tonnes of household waste in 2020/21, a **9% increase** on 2019/20. With more people at home during three national lockdowns and an increase in online shopping, take away dinners and home clear outs, more waste was collected than in previous years.

2020/21 saw a **28% increase** in Garden Waste customers with an additional **4,437 sign ups** throughout the year. There was also a **63% increase** in Garden Waste enquiries to Customer Services.

Work to deliver a new, modern Waste Strategy continued with the draft going to Cabinet in November 2020. This was also released for consultation and **3,865** residents responded with comments.

In May 2020 the #Crabby campaign helped change the behaviour of those who litter. This coincided with a **40% increase** in visitors to the beaches in the district and resulted in a **29% reduction** in rubbish collections, creating a **£10,000 saving**.

The number of fly tipping incidents reported to customer services increased by 28% to over **1,100**. In addition to this, operatives encountered increased fly tipping incidents at Council recycling bring sites (1,898) as well as unreported fly tips at other locations across the district (519), amounting to an additional **2,417 fly tips** throughout the financial year. The Council issued **17 fixed penalty notices** during 2020/21, an **increase of 88%** when compared to the previous year.

As a response to the pandemic cleaning activities on public conveniences were increased and this continues to be budgeted for in 2021/22 to ensure they remain Covid-19 safe. The public conveniences at Milford-on-Sea were replaced in 2020 as planned.

Environmental Health were diverted from their normal functions to support the Covid-19 response. The Portfolio dealt with over **1,100** Covid related service requests from March 2020, including complaints and queries from the public and requests for advice from businesses. **300 new businesses** were set up during the year (248 2019/20), although food hygiene interventions fell significantly

from 701 (2019/20) to 146 (2020/21). Officers visited over **100** supermarkets and food retailers and **37** other premises such as garden centres, DIY stores and builders' merchants to help them keep staff and residents safe, ensuring Covid-19 compliance.

Environmental Protection received an increase in nuisance requests - including noise, air, drainage, and public health - from 548 in 2019/20 to **657** in 2020/21, with support for planning consultations also increased by **16%** to 455 during the year. The team also introduced a no charge pavement license to support local businesses to operate safely.

Work began to repair damage to the district's coastlines, most significantly damage to the Westover cliff and sea wall at Milford-on-Sea. Urgent works began in August 2020 after **48 properties** were deemed to be at risk with over **15,000 tonnes** of rock imported to support the failing wall. The Environment Agency has provided funding of **£250,000** to carry out scoping work for what could be a longer-term project in this area.

Although funding was in place to undertake drainage trials at Barton-on-Sea, work was not completed due to the change in priorities during the year.

A new cemetery was opened at Calshot, and work continued to identify potential sites in Totton and Lymington to help meet the demand for burial space. Assessments of remaining capacity and associated timescales are underway.

Performance Summary

Waste and Recycling*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Street Scene*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Environmental Health & Licensing*	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●
Coastal	Staffing	●
	Budget	●
	Service delivery impact	●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	%	↑	35%	34%	34%	→
Reduction in the number of flytipping incidents	Num	↓	900	923	1183	↑

Economic Development

Helping local businesses to grow and prosper

This Portfolio was instrumental in the response to mitigate, as far as possible, the economic impacts of the pandemic. Instead of delivering many of their normal functions the services within the Economic Development Portfolio were focussed on supporting the local economy with over **£6 million** in discretionary funding allocated to local businesses. **60%** of businesses were supported under the additional restrictions' grants provided to limited companies, new enterprises, and trades people with most applications being assessed and paid within one week.

Additionally, **£120,000** was secured from the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, including the rural resilience fund, in direct response to Covid-19, and the rural growth fund to support wider business investment.

The pop-up Business School initiative supported over **40** local individuals through week long online courses focused on starting their own enterprise.

Throughout 2020 engagement with businesses significantly improved and the Council are now in weekly contact with **60%** of the businesses in the district. The Economic Development team have also compiled a comprehensive employer database, listing detailed information on local businesses to enable relevant timely contact.

The town and parish councils were supported through the Reopening High Streets Safely initiatives, to give people the confidence to return to the High Street safely. Work has now commenced on the Welcome Back fund.

The Local Economy Task & Finish Group met with business leaders, key employers, small businesses, arts organisations and further education providers to better understand the ongoing impact to

the hospitality and tourism sector, as well as other key sectors and employers. These meetings were crucial to supporting recovery efforts as we move forward.

Improving broadband connectivity remains a priority and is arguably more important than ever as working from home has become the norm. The Economic Development team have worked in partnership with the Hampshire Superfast Broadband Team to promote community broadband funding programmes, and this is supported further through the local plan, with all new homes having a high-speed fibre connection.

In the wake of Covid-19 there has been an increased focus on initiatives to promote training and skills opportunities. The Portfolio has worked closely with Solent Apprenticeship Hub and specific schemes like the Government Kickstart to ensure that take-up in the New Forest District is maximised.

A full review of the Economic Development webpages was undertaken as part of the new NFDC website and the content was fully updated to offer a better experience for residents and businesses.

Performance Summary

Economic Development *

Staffing ●
Budget ●
Service delivery impact ●

*Significant Covid-19 impact

Key Performance Indicators

KPIs	Unit	Desired DOT	Target	2019/20	2020/21	Actual DOT
Increase in apprenticeships within the district	Num	↑	-	-29%	-19%	↓
Increase in Businesses engaged in economic development programme	Num	↑	-	N/A	2232	-
Increase in subscribers to 'Helping local businesses grow' e-news	Num	↑	-	N/A	3780	-