

Investment Priority 1. Communities and Place

Objectives

- Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.
- Building resilient, safe and healthy neighbourhoods, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

Theme 1: Pride of Place – Town Centres Improvement Programme - making them accessible vibrant and sustainable and investing in our coastal heritage

Issues to be addressed

Town centres provide a life blood of to our communities especially given the dispersed nature of the New Forest, they also play an important role within the visitor economy. It is essential that they are accessible and welcoming. We need to maintain the physical fabric, ensuring they are attractive places to visit and spend time in, both for our residents and more broadly as destinations within our tourism offer. We need to ensure a diversity of offer and within this context re-think and better utilise existing public realm and assets including our car parks.

Challenges identified include:

- Maintaining footfall, increasing dwell time, and ensuring accessibility
- Need to rethink & make better use of public space & assets
- Promote active lifestyles
- Drive behavioral change around litter and waste
- Focus on our more deprived communities – incorporating activities

Coastal – the coastline and its beaches are important to our communities and our visitor economy, more focus is needed to promote our beaches as places to visit, to support the visitor economy. Historic shelters play a strong role in creating local pride and belonging marking the line of the south coast path running along the length of our historic coastline and are used by tourists, visitors, and local communities.

Solutions for Pride of Place

Project title	Revenue	Capital	Year	Total allocation
<p>Continued marketing of ‘Supporting our community’ project. Provide a dedicated webpage, continued posts in social media and in print. Promotion of events and shop local / support local businesses messaging. This will be implemented through a commissioned contract. Coastal Promotional Campaign promoting beaches as a place to visit</p>	£70,000	£0	22-23 23-24 24-25	£70,000
<p>Town Centre Improvements Programme objectives around regeneration, social inclusion, adaptation to climate change, supporting local businesses and sustainable transport solutions. Schemes proposed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities such as one-off markets/healthy eating demonstrations and cultural events with early pilot run in Totton as part of the Totton Regeneration project. • Better signage for town centre users and visitors- develop a signage strategy for each town centre • Greening our car parks – reducing tarmac and making improvements biodiversity, provision of additional bike stands 	£220,000	£0	22-23 23-24 24-25	£220,000
<p>Accelerate the provision of EV vehicle charging points Accelerate the provision of EV vehicle charging points Feasibility work to identify programme of installations and identify a delivery partner focusing on public areas / areas of maximum benefit to accelerate the adoption of electric car use. This forms part of the wider review of car parking assets and the implementation of carbon reduction across the district. This will include detailed design work for the programme of installations</p>	£25,000	£50,000	22-23 23-24 24-25	£75,000

and securing a delivery partner to deliver charging infrastructure across the District.				
<p>Coastal beach shelters</p> <p>Coastal beach shelter essential renovation works to provide local communities and visitors with a place to rest and meet outside. Renovation works would protect and preserve for the future. We would include incorporating bee bricks, bird houses and other fauna initiatives. Securing these places for the future would firm a sense of localised pride of our unique place. These vernacular shelters mark the line of the south coast path running along the length of our historic coastline and are used by tourists, visitors, and local communities. They are a part of our seaside's past and present identity. Without renovation, we will lose them from our future. protect and preserve these facilities for the future creating a sense of localised pride of our unique place.</p>	£22,000	£88,000	22-23 23-24 24-25	£110,000
<p>Implementation of Litter Strategy</p> <p>Deliver a Litter Reduction scheme, building on the successful pilot. This initiative has two strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter Reduction scheme with community engagement campaign. Two-year programme to deliver an education programme. Community engagement and events, this would build on the Care for the Forest campaign. • Review of bins in public places with investment in solar bins to support the delivery of the Litter Strategy priorities and improve local environments including reducing the amount of waste. less wind-blown litter entering the ocean and improving appears of our towns and creating pride in place. 	£80,000	£20,000	22-23 23-24 24-25	£100,000
<p>E bike / bike hiring schemes & car sharing</p> <p>To increase delivery of low carbon transport options, a feasibility study and pilot / demonstration project to develop a bike/e bike share or hire scheme and /or car clubs across the district. The</p>	£50,000		24-25	£50,000

feasibility exercise will identify the set up and on-going costs, and locations for bike shares etc. Learning from the pilot scheme will inform wider roll out and scalability. Anticipated outcomes - reduction in Co2 omissions, and transports solutions for disconnected residents, notably young people.				
Improve the Cultural offer Commission work to lead a programme working with community and heritage organizations to develop a series of community art projects in a range of locations across the district. An initial project will be brought forward as part of the Totton regeneration project.	£100,000		24-25	£100,000
Subtotal				£725,000

Theme 2: Promote Inclusive and Active Lifestyles

This investment responds to the challenges of both an ageing demographic and provide facilities to encourage our young people to be more active. This year's Active Lives report, published April 2022, showed that amongst New Forest adults inactivity levels rose to (19.5% in 20/21) with a decrease to being physically active (64.6% in 20/21). The pandemic has had a major impact and widened existing inequalities and this important challenge will remain a key priority of this Council. A proportion of funding is allocated to improve play and gym facilities for young people across the District.

Solution for Promote Inclusive and Active Lifestyles

Project title	Revenue	Capital	Delivery year	Total allocation
Encouraging Active Lifestyles Building on the current play audit work, as part of its healthier lifestyles for all the project would address the recommendations and develop a strategy and delivery programme to install and improve play and gym facilities across the district.	£20,000	£80,000	23-24 24-25	£100,000

			Subtotal	£100,000
			Communities and Place Total	£825,000

Investment Priority 2: Business Support

Objectives

- Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion, through investments that build on existing industries and institutions, and range from support for starting businesses to visible improvements to local retail, hospitality and leisure sector facilities
- Increasing private sector investment in growth enhancing activities, through targeted support for small and medium sized businesses to undertake new-to firm innovation, adopt productivity enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques, and start or grow their exports.
- Promoting networking and collaboration, through interventions that bring together businesses and partners within and across sectors to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and stimulate innovation and growth.

The issue to be addressed

The New Forest is the third largest economy in the Hampshire County Council Area with a total Gross Value Added of £4.4bn per annum and household income in-line with county averages. The district has a relatively large business base of just under 8,000 businesses. It is predominantly made up of SME's, with micro-businesses (0-9 employees) featuring more strongly in rural areas.

Leisure, tourism and marine along with their associated supply chains are significant sectors within the District. Businesses in the care sector in New Forest are slightly overrepresented relative to the Hampshire average and demand for care related activities is expected to increase with a projected ageing population expanding across the New Forest.

The land-based sector is an integral part of the New Forest landscape and an important contributor to the local economy in terms of businesses and employment. The sector is wide ranging in scope going beyond 'traditional' agricultural. Current estimates suggest there are over 1,000 New Forest businesses in the land-based sector, of which 470 are agricultural holdings.

Intra-regional variations exist with the Avon Valley which has a more favourable industrial structure punching above its weight economically. Whereas the Totton and Waterside economy is a typical to the rest of the New Forest with manufacturing and marine activities in Totton and Hythe and oil refining at Fawley shaping the economy locally.

Broadly businesses experience relatively good survival rates compared to regional and national averages, but start-up rates need to increase, and overall growth is sluggish with scale-up initiatives a strategic focus for the Council. Key sectors such as marine, tourism and care lag in comparison with Hampshire averages. Higher value-added services are underrepresented in the area and the working age population is projected to contract. This will affect demand and investment over the medium term and beyond.

Helping businesses, industries and High Streets respond to social, environmental and technological changes and innovation are identified priorities for the District Council.

Solution for Business Support

Project title	Revenue	Capital	Delivery year	Total allocation
Build on existing initiatives such as Innovation Hub and Growth Hub. Themes include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business startup • Business Growth • Export • Net Zero 	£75,000	£0	24-25	£75,000
		Business Support Total		£75,000

Investment Priority 3: People and Skills

As the economy has recovered post-pandemic, the picture is broadly positive for the New Forest. The claimant count overall has significantly reduced and is now 2% of the working-age population, which compares favourably to a Southeast average of 3% and national average of 3.9%. However, some localities continue to experience consistently higher levels of unemployment. Unemployment in Holbury and North Blackfield ward for example currently stands at 3.5% and approximately 45% of all claimants are found in the Totton and

Waterside area. Similarly, youth unemployment, (18-24 years) has dropped to an average of 2.7 %, equating to 285 young people across the District, but again it is geographically concentrated in the more deprived neighbourhoods.

The New Forest is an exceptional place to live and work; it scores highly on quality-of-life indicators and is one of the least deprived local authority areas in England; ranked 255th out of 326 districts according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. However this masks localised hotspots of neighbourhood deprivation, notably in the Totton and Waterside area and localities around Milton and Pennington. For example Holbury and North Blackfield, and Furzedown and Harley are amongst the 20% most deprived neighborhoods in the country, as are parts of Calshot, and Totton North falling into the most 30% deprived bracket. Incidences of low educational attainment and child poverty is more prevalent in these deprived communities. Community cohesion and a lack of access to services have been highlighted as issues on the Waterside, which is geographically isolated and disconnected from the rest of the District.

In line with the investment priorities for people and skills and the funding available, a targeted grass-roots approach to support those furthest from the labour market into employment and training in key localities such as Totton and Waterside, and Pennington are included in the investment plan. The activities will also involve a strand specifically on young people, linked to existing facilities such as the Youth Hub. The Council will work with local stakeholders such as the New Forest Community First to develop a small grants programme for grass-roots organisations to work closely with residents most at risk from exclusion. The other investment priority for the Council is one which focuses on skills development.

The second strand of the people and skills investment proposals will focus on skills development. Qualifications and skills enhance employment opportunities for the individual and are the major driver of productivity, growth, competitiveness and economic prosperity of the local economy. Action is required to address the skills deficit at higher levels, (L4+) and address the higher-than-average incidences of residents with low or no qualifications & skills.

Levels of higher qualification outcomes need to improve, the average for the District is 37.3%, compared to a Hampshire average 40.1% and a Southeast average of 45.1%¹. At the lower end of the distribution scale, Totton and Waterside only shows a slightly higher incidence of residents with no qualifications, with an average of 11.8% as opposed to 11% in the Avon Valley and 11.4% in the Core Forest and Coastal area. It is however at the higher-level that the variance is most apparent; with Totton and Waterside having only a quarter (25.3%) of its resident population qualified to level 4 and above, compared with Avon Valley at 34.5% and the Core Forest and Coastal sub-area at 32.4% respectively. This is a significant gap in attainment. Holbury and North Blackfield and Butts Ash Dibden Purlieu are in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods for education skills and training.

¹ ONS APS Jan 2021

In addition, the same 2018 economic profile highlighted an existing net deficit in the worker population of over 7000. This coupled with out-commuting patterns that exceed in-commuting and a declining pool of workers further emphasises the need to develop approaches that incentivise residents and business alike to invest in developing the skills base for the benefit of the workforce and the economy.

This second strand of the People and Skills Investment Priority will collaborate with stakeholders to increase the intensity of economically relevant skills training taking place across the area. The approach responds to broader strategic objectives concerning the need to support the transition to a low carbon economy and develop higher technical skills across a range of key sectors.

The Council will work strategically with existing Further and Higher Education and Private Training providers to maximise opportunities and leverage from recent investments via the Skills Development Fund, which has provided investment in marine technologies, and regional initiatives such as the Institute of Technology (IoT). The IoT is integral to delivering the Government's ambitions in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, Freeports, Maritime 2050, in addition to the levelling-up agenda. The curricula will focus on the STEM higher technical skills required across digital technologies, engineering and marine.

The New Forest needs to ensure a pipeline of talent offset an aging demographic, and improve job opportunities, which in turn will address deprivation. The IoT is a hub and spoke model, with capital investments being made across the existing Solent FE and HE infrastructure. This affords an opportunity locally to increase delivery of economically relevant training in higher level skills.

Previous industries along the Totton and Waterside area have left a mixed legacy. Whilst the demographic profile of Totton and Waterside is younger than the rest of the New Forest, its GVA per capita is approximately 80% of the New Forest average. This indicates that area underperforms significantly despite having the largest working age population. There is opportunity for the existing workforce especially those in the marine manufacturing sectors to transition to higher value-add production jobs, which will come forward as the Freeport develops

As highlighted above, upskilling & re-training of the existing workforce is required across the board in new technologies 'green skills' to support the economy transition to a low carbon future. The approach is therefore to develop a programme where both businesses and residents are incentivised to invest in skills and training. Noting that existing mechanisms such as the skills and apprenticeship hub are already able to provide 'honest brokerage' and there are existing programmes such as skills support for the workplace which are able to provide some subsidized training at levels 3 & 4 to employed people the emphasis is one of collaboration rather than duplication getting key messages out to businesses and groups working in communities through existing networks to demonstrating the value of investing in skills development and promoting the excellent local offer.

It is also acknowledged that aspiration and attainment are an issue where some young people, are lacking the entry-level requirements required by both the existing and emerging labour market. Work already takes place in our schools and colleges to bring schools and

businesses together through the enterprise programme and careers hub. The Council will continue to work with key delivery partners to ensure opportunities are maximized, supporting the recruitment of business champions and enterprises advisers.

People and Skills Solutions

Project title	Revenue	Capital	Delivery year	Total allocation
Community projects to support residents furthest from the labour market in our deprived communities into employment and training	£70,000	£0	24-25	£70,000
Develop an initiative to promote skills and training in green skills	£30,000	£0	24-25	£30,000
		People and Skills Total		£100,000