

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

[\(Meeting held on 12 January 2023\)](#)

1. COUNCIL MOTION – SUPPORT FOR NEW FOREST FARMERS

At their meeting on 12 January 2023, the Environment and Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Panel considered the following motion from Council, submitted by Cllr M Wade:

'The cost-of-living crisis affects all areas of our nation. However, many members of the farming community, so important in the production of 54% of the nation's food supply, are struggling to survive in the current financial environment and this includes many of New Forest's farmers. A thriving agricultural sector is crucial to New Forest's economy, landscape, and environment.

This council notes the cost of animal feed is up by 60% and fertilizer cost by 200%. In the last year, these and other increased costs are against a backdrop of a changing subsidy regime from the government with some farms at risk of losing up to 20% of their income this way. This is leading to many farmers to decide to give up their farms or raise food prices to survive further impacting the cost of living of ordinary New Forest residents.

This Council sees that some farmers are being forced to sell their back up land, which has Forest Rights, and the loss of this land has serious impact on the sustainability of the ancient New Forest tradition of commoning if alternative support for local farmers is not made available.

This Council recognises that government funding schemes to help farmers exist but due to the current financial environment different approaches need to be considered to improve on the ongoing support.

Therefore, this council will write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing its concerns about financial state of the farming community and request greater financial support for Farmers to be able to continue to produce food for the UK market at sustainable prices.'

Cllr M Wade presented the motion to Panel and highlighted his concerns regarding the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on farmers in the New Forest. The Panel considered how the rising costs of day-to-day goods, such as feed and fertiliser, were forcing some farmers to consider whether to sell their back up land and what implications this may have on both the Forest Rights and the sustainability of the Commoning tradition.

Members were receptive to the struggle facing farmers in the New Forest and their financial situation. It was considered how the rising cost in farming would have a knock-on effect to the wider community and economy. There was unanimous agreement that these concerns should be made to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the form of a statement from NFDC.

RECOMMENDED:

That Council approve the motion and, supported by Council officers, write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs requesting greater financial support for farmers.

CLLR S RIPPON-SWAINE

CHAIRMAN