

10 JULY 2023

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 10 July 2023.

- * Cllr Neville Penman (Chairman)
- * Cllr David Hawkins (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Peter Armstrong
Geoffrey Blunden
- * Hilary Brand
Mark Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Keith Craze
- * Kate Crisell
- * Sean Cullen
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * Philip Dowd
- * Barry Dunning
- * Jacqui England
- * Allan Glass
David Harrison
- * Matthew Hartmann
- * John Haywood
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Nigel Linford
Patrick Mballa
- * Colm McCarthy

Councillors:

- David Millar
- Neil Millington
- * Ian Murray
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Adam Parker
- * Dave Penny
- * Dan Poole
- * Caroline Rackham
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Janet Richards
- * Barry Rickman
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * John Sleep
- * Michael Thierry
- * Derek Tipp
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * Phil Woods
- * Richard Young

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Grainne O'Rourke, Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Chris Noble, Daniel Reynafarje, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Blunden, Clark, Harrison, Mballa, Millar and Millington.

16 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 22 May 2023, be confirmed.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Members.

Cllr Heron declared that he knew the owner of a company identified within Appendix 3 of Agenda Item 9, the Development of a New Operational Services Depot at Hardley Industrial Estate. Cllr Heron clarified that he would not participate in any debate, nor would he vote on this item.

Cllr Rackham declared, for transparency purposes, that she was the Chair of the Hounslow Community Centre, located in close proximity to the site under discussion for Agenda Item 9, the Development of a New Operational Services Depot at Hardley Industrial Estate. She concluded that there were no common law reasons of bias or predetermination from preventing her participation on this item.

18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Engagements**

The Chairman referred to the following recent engagements:-

8 June

Attended the Sway Place 15th Birthday with Cllr Barry Rickman, celebrating 15 years of Care UK.

17 June

Attended Fawley Armed Forces day, celebrating 10 years of this event with Fawley Parish Council at Gang Warily Recreation and Community Centre.

19 June

Raised the Armed Forces Flag with the Leader of the Council and the Council's Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Alvin Reid.

26 June

Met with fellow Chairmen and Mayors for a tour of the Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum, Winchester, hosted by His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson.

30 June

Attended the Gala Awards of Brockenhurst College celebrating their most outstanding students, where he presented the Apprentice of the Year Award.

5 July

Launched the West Wight Wanderer at Brockenhurst train station. This is to promote discounted travel from Brockenhurst to the Isle of Wight and from the island to the New Forest. This promotion is led by the New Forest Community Rail Partnership but also comes from sharing best practice with the neighbouring

Community Rail Partnership 'Three Rivers' now under Hampshire, noting their 'Waterside Wanderer' promotion.

Attended the New Forest Children's University Graduation and presented the children with their certificates. The Children's University, delivered by the Hive, is a small charity working with some schools and individual families in the New Forest. They encourage and celebrate participation in extra-curricular activities in and outside of school.

7 July

His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mayors, Chairmen and other dignitaries attended the Hampshire Duke of Edinburgh Award Forum at the Great Hall in Winchester. This was an opportunity for new Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award Holders across Hampshire to come together and celebrate their achievements.

10 July

Attended and laid a wreath in remembrance at the Commemoration of the Indian Soldiers Memorial in New Milton.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Vice-Chairman who, on 25 June, attended the annual Hampshire Scouts AGM, which involved a tour of the site in Brockenhurst and various activities.

Council Constitution

Members were reminded of the recent adoption of a refreshed Constitution and the new format of the agenda, where the Reports of the Cabinet, Committees and Panels were replaced with individual reports relating to the subjects which require a Council decision. The comprehensive background reports included, or were supplemented by, the discussion and recommendations from the Cabinet, Committees and Panels.

The Chairman welcomed this change, as adopted by the Council, enabling focused discussion on the subjects requiring a Council decision, including all of the relevant background information and previous consideration undertaken by the Cabinet, Committees and Panels.

He reminded Members that Standing Orders remained the same, with each councillor entitled to speak once on each item of business. Therefore, he asked Members to be mindful of when to choose to contribute to a debate, to support the smooth running of the meeting. The mover of each report would be invited to respond once at the end of the debate.

One Member asked if every item considered by Cabinet that was not subject to Council approval, was considered by an Overview and Scrutiny Panel at some stage. The Service Manager – Democratic and Support Services highlighted to the Council that the changes to the Constitution referred to by the Chairman of the Council had been adopted by the Council in April 2023, for implementation in May 2023 following the recent quadrennial District Elections.

Items not requiring a decision by the Council may have been considered by different Council bodies on their route to a final approval, such as the Cabinet, Committees or Panels, depending on their nature. It should be noted that this is a

matter for those bodies to consider as part of their agenda planning. It was noted that a further 30 minutes was also reserved on the Council agenda for questions to the Leader, Portfolio Holders or Committee and Panel Chairmen on any matters on their respective Council functions.

19 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Homes for Ukraine

The Leader was pleased to see how the Council was using some of its Homes for Ukraine funding towards English lessons at the library in Lymington. These lessons are one of the important ways the Council were supporting the Ukrainian community in the district, along with housing, family, and employment support.

374 guests had arrived in total, representing 183 households. All had been visited by and supported by the Council's team. This also included the prevention of 42 homeless households by supporting them to obtain private rented sector accommodation, and two others to find new hosts. The Council avoided using temporary accommodation placements other than two families prior to longer term moves.

Shop Doctor Programme

The Leader highlighted the local independent shops and hospitality businesses in the district, who took part in the mystery shopper programme. The 'Shop Doctor' project was organised by the Council's Economic Development team and 78 high street shops and hospitality businesses took part, with the majority scoring over 80% for their customer experience. This was promoted as a wonderful result for the local economy, especially when High Streets were a crucial element of local communities. Helping local independent retailers to continue to thrive remained a key priority for the Council.

20 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Cllr S Davies introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 7 June 2023. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

In response to a question on the number of enforcement actions, a number of Members highlighted the importance of working positively with private landlords such as via the Housing Forum, with a reflection of how successful the policy was being how engaged private sector partners were, rather than the number of enforcement actions which were considered to be a last resort.

Members welcomed the policy as a firm but fair approach to working in partnership with the private sector, promoting the maintaining and where possible, the raising of high standards. Requests for a review in 12 months time were welcomed by the Portfolio Holder.

It was clarified that this policy did not cover short term holiday lets and apartment rentals such as Airbnb.

RESOLVED:

That the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, establishing the remedies and legislative powers available to Officers to ensure housing standards are met in the private housing sector, be approved.

21 CHANGE TO DISMISSAL APPEAL PROCESS

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the HR Committee meeting held on 8 June 2023. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

One Member questioned to whom the benefit of this change was, and that it may not necessarily be in the interest of the employee.

In response to a request for the unions response to the proposal, paragraph 12.1 of the report outlined that the Employee Side representatives had no issues or concerns with the changes proposed.

In summary, one Member highlighted how stressful an appeal was to an employee and bringing forward these matters in a timely manner was to the benefit of all involved in the process. It was also highlighted that the involvement and resolution by people trained appropriately and experienced in these matters was also to the benefit of the employee and all parties, given the complexity of employment law.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposal to change the internal Appeal process in relation to dismissals, outlined at section 6 of the report, be agreed.
2. That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make the consequential changes arising to the Constitution, which include the Appeals Committee Terms of Reference.

22 WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION POLICY

Cllr S Davies introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 5 July 2023 as circulated with the Supplementary Council agenda. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

A number of questions were raised by Council Members throughout debate, including support for businesses, side waste and enforcement, ensuring that education and support was available to residents, the adaption of the service where wheeled bins were not suitable and the assisted collection policy; which brought about support to residents to collect wheeled bins from the property, rather than the kerbside.

Some concerns were raised over the introduction of wheeled bins to the New Forest, reflecting on its special characteristics. This had been the subject of debate throughout the development of the waste strategy.

The Chairman of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel highlighted the detailed consideration undertaken in respect of the report and the Panel's cross-party support for the recommendations.

In summing up, the significant work to develop the policy over the last few years was highlighted, which included regular constructive Member challenge. Members were informed that the combining of bins was not desirable, given the risk of cross contamination and consequent impact on recycling rates. The commitment to always support and inform before enforcement action was taken was reiterated. The contention raised in debate over wheeled bins was addressed, with the overwhelming support and understanding at resident meetings and community events that the Portfolio Holder had attended in raising awareness of the wider waste strategy, in striving for improved rates of recycling.

RESOLVED:

That the adoption of the proposed waste and recycling collection policy and new garden waste terms and conditions for the roll-out of new collection services as set out in the Waste Strategy 2022-2027, be approved.

Note:-

During the debate on this item, clarification was sought on the ability of Members to ask questions on items throughout the course of each debate. The Chief Executive, and Monitoring Officer both clarified a number of points. Firstly, that the Council's Standing Orders had always provided for each councillor to speak once on each item. Therefore, it was not within the gift of the Chairman to facilitate a question and answer style session with immediate responses given to each question, resulting in a back and forth between Members and the relevant Portfolio Holder. The Chairman's remarks at the start of the meeting, that it was important for Members to decide when to contribute during a debate, was relevant to this point. Secondly, any questions that Members asked during the course of debate could be responded to in the summing up given by the relevant Cabinet Member or Committee Chairman, who had moved the recommendations. It was suggested that whilst Members may put any questions of their choosing during debate, those of a very technical nature may be best suited to other forums, particularly those that required an officer to provide a detailed answer.

23 GARDEN WASTE FEES AND CHARGES 2024-25

Cllr S Davies introduced the report and moved the adoption of the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 5 July 2023, as circulated with the Supplementary Council agenda. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

Cllr M Wade moved an amendment, to provide the wheeled bins for the garden waste service free of charge, removing the bin supply charge of £25 noted in Appendix 1 of the report. He highlighted his understanding of the need to bring about a more reflective charge in respect of the service but did not consider it appropriate to also charge an additional amount to supply the physical bin. Cllr J Davies seconded the amendment.

The Council debated the amendment. Those speaking in favour suggested that the physical bin required to access the service ought to be included as part of the service charge. Some concerns were raised about fly tipping of garden waste and the free supply of bins to access the discretionary service could potentially discourage this behaviour. One Member sought reassurance of the messaging reaching residents in a timely manner to reduce the risk of those needing to pay the supply charge.

Members speaking against the amendment highlighted that the cost of the wheeled bins had to be accounted for somewhere. If the cost was not passed on through the service in some form, it would ultimately be passed across the District in the cost of the Council's operation, including to those who did not subscribe to this discretionary service. The overall value for money of the service was highlighted. It was also noted that the supply charge would be applicable only to customers signing up outside of the initial sign up period, and those signing up for an additional bin. One Member highlighted the opportunity to take green waste to household recycling centres for free and this was an additional, discretionary service which needed to be properly costed. The opportunity for residents to share bins was noted, wherever appropriate, therefore also sharing the cost.

In summing up the amendment, Cllr M Wade highlighted the difficulty for some residents of going to the household recycling centres, and suggested that the cost of the physical bins could be absorbed within the first year's rise to the service charge. In responding to the amendment, Cllr S Davies promoted the service as an additional recycling opportunity as a paid for service, at an exceptional value, including the cost of £25 for late sign-ups or additional bins, which he considered to be very reasonable.

A request for a recorded vote on the amendment did not gain the support of the required number of Members.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost. The Council proceeded to vote on the substantive motion.

RESOLVED:

That the adoption of the proposed garden waste fees as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, applicable from 1 April 2024, be approved.

24 DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW OPERATIONAL SERVICES DEPOT AT HARDLEY INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

The Chairman reminded Members that Appendix 3 of the report relating to this item contained exempt information, and to be mindful of this before speaking, should the Council need to move into a non-public session.

Cllr S Davies introduced the report and moved the adoption of the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 5 July 2023, as circulated with the Supplementary Council agenda. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

In response to a question on the provisions made for staff, it was confirmed that staff had been fully consulted and that transport provision was being considered as part of the process.

RESOLVED:

1. That the allocation of £7,800,000 in funding to complete this project, this figure being inclusive of all construction and relocation costs, be approved; and
2. That the contractor identified in Confidential Appendix 3 be appointed as the preferred bidder to design and build the operational services depot on land at Hardley Industrial Estate.

Note – Cllr Heron requested that his abstention from the resolution above, be recorded, having not participated following the declaration of his interest.

25 QUESTIONS

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22, as follows:-

- From Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole on community safety measures.
- From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp on protections for Dibden Bay.
- From Cllr A Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary (in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden) on 'No Mow May'.
- From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole on deprivation.
- From Cllr Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp (dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Clark) on Fawley S106.
- From Cllr Sleep to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole on culture on the Waterside.
- From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies on building Council homes.

Note – A copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

26 NOTICE OF MOTION

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr Osborne moved the following motion:-

“Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK, and around the world. The global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and—alongside this—the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction. In fact, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world as more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline.

Climate change remains a major concern for voters with 66% of people (according to YouGov) expressing they are 'worried about climate change and its effects'. Alongside this, the popularity of Sir David Attenborough's Save Our Wild Isles initiative demonstrates public concern that UK wildlife is being destroyed at terrifying speed.

Climate & Ecology Bill

The Climate & Ecology Bill, a private member's bill currently before the House of Commons, seeks to address the challenges that this situation poses by creating a whole-of-government approach to deliver a net zero and nature positive future.

Based on the latest science, the Bill aims to align current UK environmental policy with the need to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, which was goal agreed to at COP15, via the Kunming-Montreal Framework (22 December 2022); and reduce

greenhouse gas emissions in line with a fair share of the remaining global carbon budget to give the strongest chance of limiting global heating to 1.5C, which was the goal agreed to at COP21, via the Paris Agreement (12 December 2015).

By bridging the gap between the UK Government's current delivery, and what has been agreed at international levels, Britain has a chance to be a world leader on the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and reduced energy bills; and boosting the UK's food and energy security.

This Council notes that:

The Climate and Ecology Bill, which has been introduced in the UK Parliament on four occasions since 2020, including most recently in the House of Commons 10 May 2023. The Bill is backed by 168 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities, alongside the support of eminent scientists, such as Sir David King; environmental NGOs, such as The Wildlife Trusts and CPRE; businesses, such as The Co-operative Bank; and 30,000 members of the public.

The Bill would require the UK Government to develop and deliver a new environmental strategy, which would include:

- 1. Delivering a joined-up environmental plan, as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, requiring a plan that considers both together;*
- 2. Reducing emissions in line with 1.5°C, ensure emissions are reduced rapidly, for the best chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C;*
- 3. Not only halting, but also reversing the decline in nature, setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;*
- 4. Taking responsibility for our overseas footprint, both emissions and ecological;*
- 5. Prioritising nature in decision-making, and ending fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;*
- 6. Ensuring that no-one is left behind, by providing for retraining for people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and*
- 7. Giving people a say in finding a fair way forward through an independent and temporary Climate & Nature Assembly, representative of the UK population, an essential tool for bringing public opinion along with the unprecedented pace of change required.*

This Council has already passed a Climate and Nature Emergency motion and is now taking tackling climate change locally as an important strand of its strategy going forward. Therefore supporting the bill is aligned with local, national and international recognition we must act decisively and timely to deal with the climate crisis.

New Forest District Council therefore resolves to:

- 1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;*

2. *Inform local residents, and local press/media of this decision;*
3. *Write to MP's Sir Julian Lewis and Desmond Swayne to inform them that this motion has been passed, urging them to sign up to support the CE Bill, or thanking them for already doing so;*
4. *Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the CE Bill, expressing its support (campaign@zerohour.uk)."*

Cllr Dowd seconded the motion.

The Chairman referred to the provisions of Standing Order 42 which stated that the motion should stand referred without discussion to relevant body within whose terms of reference the subject matter of the motion comes. This was the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Leader confirmed that the Cabinet was content with this referral.

In response to a request that the motion be dealt with at this Council meeting, the Chairman confirmed that it would be referred to the relevant Panel. It should be noted that it would have been at the Chairman's discretion to allow debate on the motion at the meeting, if he considered it urgent, convenient or conducive to the despatch of business to depart from the usual referral.

RESOLVED:

That the motion be referred to the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

27 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN

FULL COUNCIL – 10 JULY 2023 – QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22

Question 1

From Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole

In the minutes of the February 2023 Council meeting, the Leader of the Council committed to three hundred thousand pounds (£300,000) in 2023/24 of investment in enhanced Community Safety measures, further enhancing the feeling of safety within our various communities. Please can you give us detail on how that funding will be used?

Answer:

Thank you for the question. As Members will know from the Council's recent Insight Survey, 96% of our residents feel safe in their local areas. However, nearly a quarter of our residents have a fear of crime. This administration is prepared to tackle this fear of crime and have allocated a substantial figure of £300,000 to roll out an extension of the Council's CCTV public network cameras across the District.

The Council's CCTV network of cameras have proved to be an extremely effective tool against crime and disorder in our District. The camera network currently operates in seven towns and villages across the district providing an active deterrence to crime and disorder, ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit. Just to give an example, last year our CCTV Service, actively tracked over 527 offences consisting of burglaries, assaults, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and the locating of missing or vulnerable people. It has also served as a very visible deterrent to the potential commission of further incidents of crime and disorder.

We are about to begin a dialogue with our Town and Parish Council partners to roll out an extension of this effective tool against crime and disorder in our District. We will look to work with our local councils and Police colleagues to ensure that the cameras go in the right places to bring about even greater results to reassure our residents that the New Forest District is a safe place to live, work and visit.

As Portfolio Holder, I am very proud that we are continuing to deliver a 24/7, 365 days a year, CCTV service, providing protection and support for both our residents and the Police.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the number of prosecutions made using Council CCTV footage in the last two years, the Portfolio Holder confirmed he would look into this outside of the meeting.

Question 2

From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp

Before the recent election I was told that it would be left for the next administration to establish how Dibden Bay would be protected from development. Now that we're in the next administration could we please hear how the Council will protect Dibden bay from Development as it has become part of the free port designated area?

Answer:

First let me reassure you that sites inside the Freeport have exactly the same protection as the rest of our district. I can also assure you that this Conservative administration will do its

utmost to prevent any undesirable development from taking place anywhere in our district, including Dibden Bay. Any development would need planning permission from the District Council, or for major development, the Secretary of State. If a proposal were made we would consider its affect on the economy, the environment and on local communities and then respond. For further detailed information I recommend you study our Local Plan which has a specific policy on Dibden Bay, ECON04 (PP77 -79).

Note – in response to a supplementary question on research on the ecological impact on Dibden Bay, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the significant environmental research on Dibden Bay that has taken place over a number of years and any future proposals would be subject to further environmental considerations.

Question 3

From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

I, like most Cllrs around the District have received a significant amount of feedback on the Council's 'No Mow May' and grass cutting policy. Much of it has been positive, and it has been encouraging to see wildflowers growing and promoting biodiversity throughout the area. However, clearly there are lessons to be learnt with the maintenance of specific areas such as near main roads and junctions. So, we can ensure our residents are understanding and support how approach, would you agree to a consultation with local Residents, Cllrs, and our fantastic Open Spaces Team on the policy, so next 'No Mow May' receives even more Community Support?

Answer:

Thank you for your question Councillor Wade, I am pleased to hear that most of the feedback you have received has been positive, that certainly reflects my experience also.

Members will I am sure agree that taking steps to address the climate and nature emergency is a very important issue for this whole Council, and we need to demonstrate positive action and civic leadership on this issue.

There is much that lies outside of our control and where we rely on partners to deliver, but where we can take steps to effect change for the benefit of nature and the environment, I believe we should do so – and that includes in our operations and in reviewing our historic approaches to mowing and streetscene.

“No Mow May” is a nationally recognised initiative and forms part of this Council's approach to preserving biodiversity, following the declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency. Perhaps the terminology “no mow” is not as helpful as it can be as it suggests we are not doing something – when in fact all we have done operationally is delay the timing of the first of the scheduled cuts to enable a more abundant habitat for pollinators at a key time of year.

Maybe next year we should rename the scheme “Let it Bee” as I am certain that a small amount of visual impact will have had massive benefits for insects, bees and other pollinators.

We have of course been recording all feedback received, and again I reiterate this has been absolutely in the majority positive. I think that was because the scheme was carefully planned, for example, in known locations where, for highway safety visibility reasons grass cutting needed to be maintained, this was carried out so that site lines at junctions were preserved. As part of our review, safety concerns raised about other specific locations have

been reviewed so that we are learning from our approach this year to make it even better next year.

This is part of a wider review of the scheme which will include meeting with stakeholders such as HCC in their position as Highways Authority.

Finally we will continue to work with our communications teams to ensure that we showcase the positive impacts that delaying the cutting of grassed areas can have, recognising that change and positive action for the climate and nature is not always recognised for what it is by all.

Notes – This question was dealt with by the Leader in the absence of the Portfolio Holder. In response to a supplementary question on the responsibility for different open spaces, the Leader would refer this to the Portfolio Holder for a response outside of the meeting.

Question 4

From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole

During the previous Council, I tried to get the Council to write up a deprivation action plan, like they have in other councils, but that was torpedoed by Conservative Councillors. With a new-look council, will "reducing poverty and deprivation" now be included as an objective in the upcoming corporate plan?

Answer:

Thank you for the question. This administration puts the most vulnerable in our communities, at the heart of everything it does. Our days' work is all about improving the lives of our communities, including helping the most vulnerable who are experiencing poverty and deprivation.

Let me tell you of some of the work that we are doing:-

We have been working hard on a significant number of initiatives with our local partners, including Citizens Advice and Fare Share to develop and support 11 food larders across the district to help households make their money go further. These food larders have been a great success and are invaluable to many in our communities. These are in addition to the existing food banks which are in place across the District, which we support. We have also developed 5 weekly community hubs where residents can get a hot drink and something to eat and also to meet with officers from our Benefits and Housing teams, as well as from Citizens Advice and other partners, who provide support, advice and information.

We have a well-established Health and Wellbeing Action Plan for our District, where we are facilitating the delivery of a great number of initiatives on the ground- ranging from warmer homes grants, tackling alcohol and drug related harm, promoting opportunities for the youth within our District through to improving our neighbourhoods, installing pride and place and establishing community cohesion.

Our Homelessness Team continues to develop local protocols and initiatives to promote health, housing and wellbeing in our communities. We have established multi-disciplinary health and housing teams which support vulnerable people holistically; we have co-written the Hampshire Care leavers protocol, established referral pathways between lead agencies to secure help quicker, supported a number of clients secure employment and counselling services to improve their situations and worked with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to establish a panel to action support to the most vulnerable people in the Waterside area. In

Hythe we work in partnership with The Crossings to support vulnerable people, with a host of needs, in their locality.

To support households we have also proactively administered various government schemes, providing advice, supporting and signposting information to residents; we chair meetings with numerous organisations that provide a range of support to households across the district to share information and work together, and we actively promote the support available through social media, resident emails and by directly working with communities, such as attending the recent Hythe Community Champions event. We also are intending to regenerate St. Georges Hall, Calshot using Shared Prosperity Funding. This hall sits within an important community and it is important that we do all that we can to improve this much needed facility.

For our 5,200 council tenancies we have a dedicated support worker who is focussing on assisting tenants with downsizing to smaller and more affordable accommodation.

As you can see, we are doing a great deal to support our communities, especially the most vulnerable.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the Council showing civic leadership on deprivation, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he was beginning talks with officers to initiate a forum with partners to discuss how the most vulnerable may continue to be supported and that no one in the District is left behind.

Question 5

From Cllr Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp

This is a follow-up to my question submitted to the Council meeting held on 11 April 22, regarding the Planning Committee's decision to grant permission to re-develop the site of the former Fawley Power Station.

The application 19/10581 is for 1,380 new homes and employment. The status was then and still is today "Awaiting decision", and is still subject to a completed Section 106 agreement.

The Case Officer addressed the Planning Committee at their December 2022 meeting with an "Update", and a completed S106 was expected in January this year.

Will the Portfolio Holder explain in specific detail and the specific reasons why we still have no completed S106 agreement. It is now 3 years since determination and no decision notice has been issued. Surely, it is in the interest of this Council to be transparent, and also, it has to be in the public interest to know what is going on?

Answer:

Council Officers have worked closely with the applicants to produce a Section 106 agreement that will ensure the essential infrastructure, mitigation and contributions. A final draft is with the applicants for signing. On 28th June we have been told that they anticipate signing by the end of July 2023. Once this is completed, planning permission can then be issued. Should this not take place, Officers will give members of the Planning Committee a further update after the end of July.

Note – this question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Clark.

Question 6

From Cllr Sleep to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole

At the Cabinet meeting held on 7 June, Cllr M Wade referred to the Waterside as a 'cultural desert'. Does the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing agree with this statement? If not, can he please explain why?

Answer:

Thank you for your question. No, I do not. The Waterside is home to a wide range of creative people and creative activity. Whilst there is an identified lack of cultural infrastructure, such as arts venues and museums, there is certainly no lack of creative potential. Culture in Common, our three-year Arts Council England project, is working with Waterside communities to realise this potential through improved cultural investment and support. So far, Culture in Common has supported the Hythe Halloween events and the re-launch of the Waterside Arts Festival, amongst other work. It is important we take the time to understand what our local Waterside communities want and need for their towns and villages. Culture in Common has undergone a local cultural engagement analysis and continues to run community consultation and opportunities for co-creation. It is an exciting time for the Waterside with lots of potential being identified for future projects and at least two more years of continued Culture in Common funding for the Waterside area. Also, Folio, now widening their reach across the district, is engaging with many Waterside based creative professionals and providing networking and training opportunities to empower local creatives to engage with their local communities.

Second Questions

Question 7

From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies

In the Annual Performance Report, it notes that we have currently completed 285 additional Council Homes, which is under half of the 600 homes target set for 2026. We are 3 years away, and only built 24 in 2021/22, are we in danger of missing this target? And as he is new to the role, are there any ideas or fresh approaches he is keen to explore in his new role?

Answer:

Thank you for the question.

I am sure Councillor Wade will recall that he asked a very similar question at Council in February in which he acknowledged the many unforeseen challenges we have faced....and continue to face.

Before I answer the question, I would like to be clear about where we are today.

As Councillor Wade correctly states, at the end of March this year the Council had provided an additional 285 council homes since April 2018.

This figure includes 75 Buy Backs; 64 S106 affordable homes and 67 homes built on Council owned land.

The remaining 79 homes have been delivered as a result of buying and converting buildings or creating homes from underutilised assets we already owned. And of these, 56 are now

providing Temporary Accommodation for single person households and families. This morning, I was delighted to see that NFDC are now inviting applications for shared-ownership homes in Burgate.

Turning to our current pipeline we have firm plans to deliver a further 144 additional affordable homes over the next three years including 60 more Buy Backs and Off-The-Shelf purchases, 14 more S106 homes, and 70 energy efficient new homes which are to be built on sites and land we have already acquired. That will take us to 429 homes, leaving a further 171 homes to meet the 600 target by April 2026.

Our Housing Development Team continues to pursue every potential opening through public bodies, private developers and that includes our own land. As Councillor Wade acknowledged in February, these are challenging times. However, I am confident that as we progress our plan we will continue to strike the right balance by delivering as many homes as we can, but I stress, always by acting prudently and spending wisely.

In the meantime, I remain immensely proud of our achievements over the last 5 years of the schemes that we have delivered already - and those that are in the pipeline.

Chairman – with your permission I will answer briefly Cllr Wade's 2nd question.

It would be slightly disingenuous of me to agree that I was "new to the role". As you know I have been actively involved in Housing since I joined the Council in 2007, first as a panellist and more recently as panel chairman.

So as you might expect, I do have some ideas to bring to the Council. But first they must be carefully thought through and costed and then shared with the Housing Panel.

The focus for now must be on delivering the plan to meet our target.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the appearance of these targets in the Annual Performance Report, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would consider the comments made by Cllr Wade.