

13 OCTOBER 2025

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 13 October 2025

- * Cllr John Sleep (Chairman)
- * Cllr Dave Penny (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

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

Councillors:

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

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Alan Bethune, James Carpenter, Sara Hamilton, Rachel Higgins, Richard Knott, Joanne McClay, Daniel Reynafarje, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Haywood, Millar, Osborne and Parker.

38 MINUTES

Cllr Blunden referred to the minutes of the meeting of 15 September, and his response to a supplementary question in relation to Question 8 from Cllr M Wade. He reported that his response at the meeting, had been provided based on the ongoing delivery arrangements of plastic sacks across the district. He reported he

had however, clarified the position regarding the provision of sacks to all members via email, following the meeting and this clarification is detailed below:

Following several members questions I wanted to offer some clarity regarding provision of sacks to residents in the New Forest referring to the recycling and rubbish section of the council's web site. Sack deliveries in the phase 1 area have ceased for now, as residents there have largely moved onto bin collections. Sack deliveries in the phase 2 area in the west of the district are now also coming to a close as we prepare for the start of bin collections. Sack deliveries in the phase 3 area (Lyndhurst, Beaulieu and Waterside) are continuing as residents are not due to commence bin collections until March next year. Going forwards, a household not suitable for bins will remain on sack collections. In line with our collection policy, the council will continue to supply clear sacks to these households, to enable full participation in recycling, but black sacks, widely available from retailers, will be provided by the householder.

The council has supplied an initial supply of liners for food waste caddies, delivered alongside the caddies and bins. These are designed to last a household for the first few months. After this initial period, residents have been advised that if they wish to continue to line the caddy, they can use small plastic bags they would otherwise throw away (like bread or salad bags), newspaper, or liners. All liners are mechanically removed at the anaerobic digestion facility before food waste is recycled.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 28 August and the meeting on 15 September 2025, be confirmed.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

40 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on the following engagements:

British Empire Medal Award Ceremony

On Friday 19 September, he had represented the District at a British Empire Medal award ceremony for Jacki Keable of the New Forest Disability Information Service. Jacki had launched the service over 30 years ago and had recently retired. The service continues to provide vital support to those in need across the local community. The award was presented to Jacki by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire.

Civic Events

The Chairman had attended the Mayor of Christchurch's Civic Day, along with civic services for the Mayor of Fareham and the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane. The Vice-Chairman, Cllr Dave Penny, attended the Harvest Civic Service for the Town Mayor of New Milton on Sunday 28 September.

Charity Variety Show

The Chairman had attended an amazing charity variety show for the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane. The show commenced with a local young dance group dressed in their 'CATS' outfits, and the rest of the show included all members of 'The Grand Order of the Water Rats'. This was finished by Rick Wakeman and his son. It was a brilliant cast and a great evening.

Tools for Self Reliance 45th Anniversary

Both the Vice-Chairman and Chairman had attended the Tools for Self Reliance 45th Anniversary on Friday, 10 October, which honoured the people, partnerships and progress that had shaped their story since 1980. There were inspiring stories from their projects in Africa and the UK and they met volunteers, supporters and staff.

Annual Law Sunday Service

Finally, the Chairman reported he and the Vice-Chairman and his consort had attended the annual Law Sunday Service on Sunday, 12 October at the invitation of the High Sheriff and the Mayor of Winchester, held at Winchester Cathedral.

Future events

The Chairman reported he was very pleased that plans were being made for a signing ceremony to be held in November at Appletree Court, for the revised and renewed Armed Forces Covenant. He would be signing this jointly with the Commanding Officer of 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, RLC and would be accompanied at the ceremony by the Leader, Cllr Jill Cleary, Cllr Alvin Reid, the Member Armed Forces Champion and the officer Armed Forces Champion with the Chief Executive and veterans who were also employees.

He concluded that he would be representing the District at the Lyndhurst service on Remembrance Sunday, as well as hosting the usual commemoration at Appletree Court on Armistice Day, Tuesday 11 November. He reported he would be very pleased to see members at this event at 11.00am, alongside Military representatives, veterans and staff.

41 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made the following announcements:

Community Grants

Local community groups in the new forest could apply for funding through the community grant scheme. The scheme provides financial support to local organisations that deliver services, activities or facilities for the benefit of residents and contributes to the wellbeing of communities across the district.

For the financial year 2025/26, over £150,000 had been awarded in revenue grants to 20 organisations. This support included helping vulnerable households, young carers and people with disabilities. Just over £77,000 had been awarded in capital grants to eight organisations, contributing to improvements to village halls, a creative hub and sports facilities.

The Leader reported that she was proud to be able to help community groups continue their valuable work, making a real difference across the district. Applications were open until 25 October 2025 for the 2026/27 allocation, and more information was available on the District Council website.

Phase 2 of the Waste and Recycling Roll out

Starting on 20 October, residents in phase 2 would start using the new waste and recycling collection service. This included, Bransgore, Fordingbridge, Ringwood and surrounding areas and residents would have their waste and recycling collected using wheeled bins and food caddies. The second phase of this roll out would mark an important milestone in the commitment to how waste and recycling would be managed across the district.

Hurst Spit Maintenance and Recycling

Coastal engineers were currently undertaking maintenance work at Hurst spit. Taking advantage of the favourable weather, shingle material was being recycled from the wider sections of the spit to reinforce the narrower areas of the spit which had experienced significant erosion following the winter storms. The essential work would help restore the integrity of the spit and ensure continued flood and erosion protection for Keyhaven and the surrounding areas this coming winter.

4 free parking days in town and village centre car parks in December

Finally, the Leader reported that four free parking days in town and village centre car parks this December had recently been announced. The first of the free parking days would be on 'Small Business Saturday', on 6 December 2025. This was an annual national campaign to encourage consumers to shop local all year round and support small businesses in their communities.

Other free parking days included the last weekend before Christmas and an additional day where local town and parishes could request free parking in support of their Christmas events. The Leader was sure that this decision would encourage residents and visitors to shop locally and support new forest businesses.

42 REVIEW OF MARKET SUPPLEMENT PAYMENTS

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and moved the recommendation. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Market Supplement Policy, as recommended by HR Committee be approved.

43 REPORT OF CABINET - 1 OCTOBER 2025

PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET

There were no speakers on items 1-3 resolved by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 October 2025.

Item 4 – Climate Change and Nature Emergency Annual Update

A comment was made by a councillor in relation to the Climate and Nature Change Action Plan (Appendix 2), in particular, page 40 which detailed public transport improvements and partnership working. It was suggested that reference to ferries be removed from this, due to requests for funding towards the Hythe ferry not being supported. It was however acknowledged that there were other ferries operating in the district such as the Isle of Wight ferry.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability reported that this would be passed to the Member Task and Finish Group to review.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**Item 5 – Medium Term Financial Plan Scene Setting**

Cllr Heron introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Cllr J Davies proposed an amendment to the motion, specifically in relation to recommendation 5 and the proposed parking charges for 2026. Cllr J Davies proposed that there be no charge for the first hour in town and village centre car parks.

Cllr Rackham seconded the amendment.

Cllr J Davies spoke on the amendment and was very pleased that at a recent Council meeting members had voted unanimously to support a motion to ask Hampshire County Council to reinstate the one hour free parking in Lymington High Street. However, it was not just the on street parking charges which had been driving trade away from the high street. Town centre parking was crucial to encourage shoppers to use the high streets and local businesses, instead of travelling to places offering free parking out of town. The Council provides five free parking days in the lead up to Christmas for this reason. The increase in the cost of the long stay car park parking clock by £80 was referenced and highlighted that the projected income arising from this increase had not materialised. There was a cost of living crisis and people were struggling to make ends meet and should be supported. The council had £1,000,000s available in reserves and should provide support people and local businesses.

Those who spoke in support of the amendment felt it would support local businesses in the district which were struggling in the current economic climate, with high business rates and competing with online shopping. Local businesses also provided employment of local people. The amendment would help to support the vibrancy of local high streets, recognising that the number of vacant retail units had been increasing over recent years and this had a detrimental impact on the character of towns and villages and reduced the footfall further. Members also felt that the amendment would support local residents in the cost of living crisis. It would encourage people to shop locally rather than to travel to places which provided free car parking, in particular it would support those short visits, for example in order to buy a pint of milk. It was felt the amendment would in turn generate more visits, increase spending and support the local economy. It was recognised that Fordingbridge, for example, had nowhere free to park and was disadvantaged as a result. It was felt that the profit received from car parks was significant and that they would continue to generate a profit if the amendment was

supported. Members suggested that the turnover of car parking spaces in the car parks would be greater making it easier for people to find a parking space. One member indicated that the amendment be run as a 12 month pilot which could be funded through reserves.

Those who spoke in opposition to the amendment expressed the view that residents could park in the town and village car parks at a discounted rate by purchasing a parking clock. This provided good value for money parking and could be used in all NFDC owned car parks in the towns and villages in the district. The council also provided support to blue badge holders with free car parking. Members who did not support the amendment, recognised that there would be a loss of income which would have a detrimental impact on the financial support which could be provided to other council services. It was felt that the car parking charges were fair and proportionate and that to provide one hour of free car parking would be irresponsible. It would have an impact on the long term financial planning of the council and the future financial deficit was highlighted. The amendment had not been costed by officers and the financial impact was unknown. It was also recognised that business rates were paid on car parks.

The view was expressed that one hour free parking in towns and villages would not support the vitality of the high streets and it was likely to encourage shorter visits. People should be encouraged to spend more time in the local high streets and spend more money, rather than visits of under an hour. It was also questioned whether there would be an impact on the availability of car parking spaces.

A number of members made reference to the motion agreed unanimously at the previous meeting to request Hampshire County Council to reinstate one hour of free parking in Lymington High Street. The view was expressed by some members that the amendment further supported this motion and that it would be hypocritical not to offer free parking in the same way as Hampshire County Council were being asked to do so. Those who spoke against the amendment cited that the offering by the County Council was different to that of the District Council and that the parking clock already provided discounted parking.

One member made reference to the parking charges in the neighbouring authority, Test Valley, which charged £1 for two hours parking and £2 for three hours of parking. It was also recognised that the car parking clock was unique to the New Forest.

Cllr J Davies thanked members for their contributions in the debate.

Cllr Heron, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate responded to the debate and acknowledged that there would be a significant financial impact with the introduction of one hour of free parking, in town and village centre car parks which had not been assessed. This would have a detrimental impact on the sale of the parking clocks and expressed concern that it would put the future of the parking clock at risk.

The Portfolio Holder reported that parking clocks provided three hours parking at a discounted rate. A change to provide one hour of free parking would reduce the time people spend in the town centres and this could have a disastrous impact for local businesses. Reference was made to the offer from Hampshire County Council in relation to on street car parking and that HCC did not provide any alternative to the parking metred charges. The NFDC parking clock provided assistance to those in the local area. Finally, he reported he could not support the amendment and that the original motion provided a balanced budget.

The Section 151 officer was invited to speak by the Chairman. He highlighted that with such a significant amendment, it was important to point out the key financial details. A level of income had been built into the balanced budget, in terms of the parking account, which was just under £5 million. The amendment had not been fully costed and therefore it was not possible to understand the scale of the costs to the council, however it could have a significant impact on the proportion of the £5 million expected in income. The S151 officer sought a degree of assurance on the longer term strategy of the proposal and acknowledged that whilst reserves had been mentioned, they could only be used once and therefore he wanted to see more clarity on how this would be funded as a sustainable proposal.

Upon put to the vote the amendment was not carried.

A councillor spoke about the Medium Term Financial Plan, recognising that with LGR the council would cease to exist in 2028. There would be one more budget where the District Council had sole control over its finances and therefore it was suggested that consideration be given regarding how to support residents in the New Forest, before the district became part of a wider unitary authority.

The Portfolio Holder Finance and Corporate reported that the council was obliged to have a medium term financial plan and of the importance of good financial planning. He highlighted that LGR could be delayed and it was responsible to ensure appropriate planning in order to hand over any new unitary authority.

RESOLVED:

That the:

1. Council's MTFP continues to be prepared on a going-concern basis, until such a time that LGR plans for the District are backed by appropriate legislation;
2. Revised MTFP forecasts, as outlined within the report and appendices be adopted;
3. Options identified to close the budget gap for 2026/27 and through to 2029/30 are developed further;
4. Reporting timeline as set out in paragraph 82 of the report be agreed, and
5. Proposed car parking fees and charges from 1 January 2026 as referenced in paragraph 53 and detailed in appendix 5 of the report, are approved.

Item 6 – Readoption (2025) of the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Flood Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy

Cllr Blunden introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

A councillor acknowledged that the updated strategy was positive in that the estimated remedial costs over the next 20 years had been adjusted downwards. A few members raised the issue of a development of Strategy for the east of the district, from Lymington to Eling, recognising that without a strategy, it was likely to block access to funding for the cost of any works to address flooding matters. This had been discussed by the relevant scrutiny panel and it was felt that the district

council should be working with the Environmental Agency in the development of a strategy.

Cllr Blunden responded to the comments made and reminded members that the development of a Strategy was not the responsibility of the district council. The Environment Agency would drive the Strategy, and the role of the council was to influence it.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council approve and adopt the revised Strategy, with the recommended leading options identified in the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for the New Forest District Council area, subject to securing the necessary funding contributions; and
2. That Council, in approving and adopting the revised Strategy, commits to developing a Funding Strategy that will seek to identify and aim to secure the necessary funding contributions to enable the national or local leading options to be implemented via future capital schemes and maintenance of existing/new schemes, noting that the exact amount of contributions will need to be confirmed as schemes are developed.

Item 7 – Draft Air Quality Strategy – Public Consultation Report

Cllr Poole introduced the report and moved the recommendation. He reported that the Air Quality Strategy had been fully supported at the Scrutiny Panel meeting and by the Cabinet. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

One member spoke in support of the Strategy and acknowledged the work of officers and members in its development. It was recognised that future developments, such as Dibden Bay were likely to cause environmental harm with increased lorry movements and the resulting level of air pollution, which was a concern for residents in the local area.

RESOLVED:

That the Air Quality Strategy be adopted.

44 REPORT OF THE MEMBER APPOINTMENT PANEL

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and highlighted that the appointment panel had unanimously agreed on the proposed appointment. She then moved the recommendation. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That Richard Knott be appointed Chief Operations Officer / Deputy Chief Executive

A few members spoke expressing their congratulations to Richard Knott on his appointment.

45 QUESTIONS

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

- From Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, regarding NFDC vehicles and other HGVs using Main Road, Dibden to access the A326 at Dibden Roundabout.
- From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies, regarding younger people and housing provision.
- From M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, regarding communication and delivery of plastic sacks.
- From Cllr Dowd, to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, regarding risks around the LGR Option 1 should central government reject or modify the proposal.
- From Cllr M Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, regarding help for the survival of high streets.
- From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden regarding the estimated cost of one-hour free parking in town / village centre car parks between 1 November - 28 February.
- From Cllr Cullen to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, regarding Hythe Ferry and the plans to get the ferry running again.
- From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden regarding a flood or coastal plan for the Waterside.

46 NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chairman announced that in accordance with Standing Order 42.2 that he would allow the motion to be dealt with at the meeting, as he considered it to be convenient to the despatch of business.

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr A Wade moved the following motion:

Council notes:

That the Government is pushing forward with an agenda to encourage Councils to build more homes, and reform the planning system, including some changes that this Council has raised serious concerns about.

NFDC faces serious challenges over affordable homes for it's Residents, with 2000 Families/Individuals on the waiting list for a NFDC property, alongside limited space for new developments due to a significant percentage of our area being within a National Park.

In 2.4 of The adopted Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy seeks to deliver a new housing requirement of at least 10,420 (net) dwellings for the period 2016-2036. Policy STR5 sets out a stepped housing target as follows:

- 2016/17 to 2020/21 - 300 dwellings per annum
- 2021/22 to 2025/26 - 400 dwellings per annum
- 2026/27 to 2035/36 - 700 dwellings per annum

National house building targets remain a difficult target to be met for our Authority, and as the current Local Plan is more than five years old and its strategic housing

policies need to be updated, the Council is now required to use the standard method housing need figure as the basis for calculating its five-year housing land supply requirement. The current (as of August 2025) standard method local housing need for the New Forest District (including the National Park) is 1,511 dwellings per annum.

Recent sales of major Police Station sites in Lymington and Hythe could have made a considerable difference in reaching our original 600 NFDC built homes, and supported wider Housing need as set out in our local Plan. Both sites if agreed to be passed to NFDC earlier could have contributed to wider social benefit, by providing safe, secure, centrally located homes for local Families. It is proven how having a home can be the foundation for your wellbeing.

By allowing a fellow public service priority, this proposal could support local housing need as reflected in our local plan and the neighbourhood plans created by local Town and Parish Councils. It would also reflect how our authority wishes to maintain local leadership over housebuilding and a willingness to develop and build homes for our local Families.

Council recommends:

1. That the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness and our Members of Parliament for New Forest East and West, requesting that the Government should consider a proposal where any sale of a public asset is offered to a fellow public body, first and not necessarily to the highest bidder from the private sector.
2. That the Council engages with the LGA to seek wider support for a campaign that allows public assets to be maintained for the wider community benefit and not sold off solely for profit

Cllr Cullen seconded the motion.

Cllr A Wade addressed the motion and explained that NFDC and members representing local communities were best placed to understand local housing need. Cllr Tipp had presented a motion a few months ago on Government proposals for planning for local councils, which was an example of Government not listening to local authorities and proposing a top down, one size fits all approach to all Councils.

Reference was made to examples where the council had built homes for those on the waiting list and encouraged development in the district, despite a significant proportion being within the National Park. The challenges for councils to provide affordable homes for residents was acknowledged and the impact of right to buy, funding cuts to council budgets and residents need for housing as a basic need.

The Council's target of 600 affordable homes to be built by 2026 and recent data indicated that 462 would be completed by 2025/26, not yet hitting that target. As of August, NFDC had 62 households in Emergency Accommodation, including many families with young children, not to mention the high number in temporary accommodation. Councillor casework around housing and homelessness was highlighted, as well as the five-year housing land supply assessment which showed that for the period 2025/26-2029/30, only 1.5 years could be demonstrated of deliverable housing sites and the significant challenges of providing homes.

LGR emphasises partnership working, efficiencies, and asset management and it was felt that public services should work together for the local community. Hythe Police Station was cited as an example of a derelict building since 2016, and that if the PCC and local authority partners had agreed to pass over this community asset to NFDC, it would keep its use within public benefit and need. The benefit was clear, public buildings were often centrally located, reducing needs for cars and encouraging sustainable travel, encourage more footfall in our high streets and ensures a community's younger generations are not forced to move away.

Cllr Wade reported he was not suggesting assets be handed over for free, but that where public assets were available, discussions take place so that the offer to another public body be prioritised. This would improve partnership working and put local community need first, and ensure such assets be put back into use more quickly. Hythe Hospital was a positive example where NFDC would have 22 affordable homes available for local people.

It was recognised that this would not solve the housing crisis, but leading and campaigning for a smarter, cooperative management of public assets, could improve the wellbeing of so many of our local people and families. This would help those 1,879 households on the housing waiting list, for example.

The Government was trying to use undemocratic and unpopular proposals to encourage house building. Cllr Wade proposed that his motion showed the desire to build homes, but also make it accessible, affordable and achievable for Councils to do so.

Those who spoke in support of the motion further highlighted the difficulties with the lengthy housing waiting list and the lack of affordable housing, particularly for young people and families. It was highlighted that a home lays the foundation for a decent life. Public land and assets, if sold to the highest bidder would be lost to the local community. The district was constrained with limited space for development due to the national park. The motion proposed an opportunity for public bodies to work together for the benefit of residents and its communities, rather than for profit. It was recognised that the district council had been interested in purchasing of Hythe Police station for example but had been unable to compete with the commercial value of the site. Finally, it was recognised that there would need to be a change in legislation by the Government in order to facilitate the proposal.

Those who spoke in opposition to the motion recognised the importance of the provision of affordable housing in the District, however, other public bodies, such as the police and NHS were individual business units, and it was essential that they were able to dispose of assets, seeking the best price, which would enable the profit received to be reinvested into that public service, which would be of benefit to those using the service. One member clarified the legal position in that Local Government Act 1972 Section 123, required public bodies to get the best return on any asset and that anything less could lead to accusations of corruption. It was felt that the open market was the best place to determine to the price of an asset.

Cllr A Wade in his summing up, expressed his thanks to those who had contributed to the debate. He spoke about the costs associated with emergency accommodation, deprivation and supporting vulnerable people. He clarified that the motion, sought collectively help public bodies that that being able to invest in more homes, would have a net benefit for them, with less need for temporary accommodation, reduced crime and antisocial behaviour, supporting the local

economy, improved mental health and wellbeing, which would reduce the demand and cost of public services.

Upon put on the vote the motion was lost.

47 ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS

The Chairman brought forward this item at the meeting, which had been published as an urgent item under agenda item 11. It was highlighted that the final allocations and memberships had been published that afternoon, following consideration by the Group Leaders.

Cllr Cleary presented the report and moved the recommendations recognising that it had been supported by all group leaders. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

A member highlighted that a seat on committees and panels had not been allocated to one of the non-aligned members and questioned whether they should be offered one.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Considered the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, and in doing so, agrees to the allocation set out in the table in Appendix 1; and
2. Appoints councillors to individual committees and panels, as identified in Appendix 2, for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2027.

48 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

This item had been considered through the previous item.

CHAIRMAN

Council – 13 October 2025

Questions Under Standing Order 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

What can be done to prevent NFDC refuse vehicles and other HGVs using Main Road, Dibden to access the A326 at Dibden Roundabout?

Reply

All of our crews are briefed, and their routes are monitored to ensure that they adhere to any weight restrictions in place in the district. In terms of the specific road being referred to, the limited number of NFDC vehicles using it are operating legally, in the same way as any other type of vehicle using the road as there are no restrictions in place.

Queries about imposing weight restrictions or otherwise, and the volume of traffic generally on a particular road are a matter for the County Council as highways authority

Note: This question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Osborne

Question 2

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Steve Davies

I'm really pleased to see the Better Futures programme. It's really important we invest in supporting young people to develop skills they need to get on in life. However, It's not just skills. Housing is the number one priority for young people. Can the Portfolio Holder tell me what the Council are doing to get more housing for younger people across the New Forest?

Reply

I certainly agree that the Council's Economic Development team are delivering some great work for our residents. So too are our housing teams.

Significant legislative duties guide our approach to meeting housing needs, and that is one steeped in equality and opportunities for all. Those aged 35 and under, represent 37% of current housing register applicants.

In the last 12 months social housing lettings to those aged 35 and under match demand, with 37% of lettings going to this age demographic.

We are very much focused on additional housing delivery; providing a range of property types and sizes to meet a range of demand.

In the next 18 months 135 flats and houses will be delivered across the district by this council, and through our enabling and planning roles a further 422 units of registered provider housing will be delivered over the next 2 years.

However, it isn't just social rented where we are providing homes which benefit young people. The Council has now sold 13 units of Shared Ownership homes with 9 sales involving applicants under the age of 35. Shared Ownership is a fantastic form of housing supporting our residents, often with their first steps on the property ladder and we are currently committed to providing a further 51 units ourselves, alongside our partners who are delivering significantly more with 129 in the pipeline.

As more and more of the strategic sites, allocated in our Local Plan, come forward the more affordable housing will be delivered for the benefit of our residents.

Note: In response to a supplementary question recognising the local circumstances in Lymington and Pennington with new market homes being retirement flats and that new affordable homes from strategic sites were for the over 55s, and how this could be overcome in order to deliver housing for young people. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged this, and felt that the emerging Local Plan would need to lay down the foundations for what it wanted to achieve. It was highlighted that the Eastlands development in New Milton had been built specifically for those under the age of 35.

Question 3

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

The residents of the Waterside are in an uproar over the failure of this council to deliver the black bin bags and recycling sacks. This is now months behind schedule. Why has the communication on this issue to local members, and more importantly the Public, on why this has happened, and when they will be finally delivered, been so poor? As this has made the situation much worse.

Reply

Sack deliveries for Phase 3 are continuing, with deliveries commencing in the Hythe area this week. Deliveries will thereafter continue in a southerly direction of travel to include Dibden Purlieu, Holbury, Blackfield, Fawley, Lepe, Langley, Calshot, Exbury, Beaulieu, and surrounding areas.

We have a main crew out and have been supplementing this with an additional crew when capacity allows. We also supplement this with streetscene capacity and agency staff when available.

We currently expect sack deliveries to be completed by mid to late December, with a necessary caveat however that if we need to deploy the resource working on sacks to deliver the statutory function and responsibility of waste collection, that will ultimately take operational priority. Evidently there have been times recently where this has been the case, and which is why sack deliveries are behind the usual schedule, and I'm sorry for any inconvenience this has caused. As highlighted in previous questions, many local authorities like us are experiencing disruption to waste services due to staff shortages and agency staff availability.

Residents who are already preparing for the future service, acquiring their own bin bags via retail or online outlets will of course be able to utilise the sacks when we deliver to them within their new wheeled containers. In the meantime, residents who are not in a position to wait to receive their sacks, can contact customer services with their address to arrange collection of additional sacks from an information office.

Waste and recycling updates are circulated to members weekly and may I refer you to the most recent one dated 10 October 2025, specifically regarding sacks. Information on all aspects of the waste service is

available for residents on the council website and supplemented via direct mailing.

In response to a supplementary question seeking the Portfolio Holder to personally commit to the residents in Phases 2 and 3 that they would not experience the same level of distribution as those in the first phase, the Portfolio Holder explained that the aim was to ensure that a first class service was provided. He could not however provide a such a commitment, as the roll out of the new service was complex and that it was difficult to predict matters such as staff shortages. It was normal for there to be some missed collections, breakdown of vehicles, hold up on the roads as this was the nature of the business. Officers were working very hard to provide an excellent service.

Question 4

From Cllr Philip Dowd to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

The Council recently backed option 1 unanimously for a Mid Hampshire Unitary that keeps the New Forest whole. What are the detailed financial, service-delivery, governance risks and contingency plans if central government rejects or modifies this proposal?

Reply

I addressed a very similar question at our last Council meeting, and I would refer you to that answer as it remains highly relevant.

I would further add that both the Council and Cabinet have endorsed a significant body of work that specifically outlines the risks associated with boundary changes, particularly in relation to service delivery and governance. These risks, and the potential implications of central government not adopting our preferred option, are the subject of ongoing dialogue with MHCLG. That engagement directly informs our scenario planning for all possible outcomes.

Our emerging LGR programme is designed to manage these risks and puts appropriate arrangements in place to keep resources, finances and emerging issues under review.

We recognise that the current lack of clarity around future groupings is in itself a key risk, and we are actively monitoring this and stepping up our planning accordingly. Our proportionate approach ensures that

contingency measures are in place to safeguard financial stability, maintain service continuity, and uphold strong governance arrangements, whatever the final decision may be.

Question 5

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

The Fawley Waterside “Venice of Britain” scheme was recently dropped due to viability concerns. What lessons has the Council learnt from that process, and how will it ensure future large developments are financially robust, environmentally sustainable, and aligned with local character?

Reply

The viability of a development scheme is the responsibility of the developer, so it is very important for a developer to do their own research before putting in a planning application to ensure the financial robustness of their scheme.

Fawley Waterside remains the most complex development site in the district in terms of delivery and constraints. Its scale, location, and environmental sensitivities mean that any future proposals will require careful consideration and detailed engagement.

I would remind Members that you are all invited to a dedicated briefing session on Tuesday, 21 October, where the developers will provide an update on progress and outline their intentions for the site. This will be an important opportunity to hear directly from them, ask questions, and understand the next steps.

The Council will continue to work closely with the developers to ensure that any proposals brought forward are deliverable, environmentally sustainable, and appropriate for the unique character of the New Forest.

In response to a supplementary question regarding future development and whether a purely commercial development would lead to a financial benefit to Fawley Parish and the wider Waterside area, the Portfolio Holder reported that he could not provide a full answer in the meeting, but would provide one thereafter in writing.

Question 6

From Cllr Phil Woods to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

High streets in the West of the New Forest are struggling, with established shops closing in Lyndhurst and many empty units in Fordingbridge. Residents suggest cheaper parking, cleaner street scenes, more frequent weeding and regular litter picking – and in many cases residents are doing these tasks on a voluntary basis. Can I ask what the Portfolio Holder what NFDC has done and will do next to help our vital high streets to survive?

Reply:

Thank you for this question which gives me opportunity to list the many initiatives that we are taking across the district. NFDC is actively supporting our high streets including Lyndhurst and Fordingbridge, through a range of initiatives:

- Economic Development team are working locally to provide tailored business support and build partnerships with Town and Parish Councils.*
- An Empty Shops Project is in development to help revitalise vacant units.*
- Up to £10,000 in Rural Prosperity funding per applicant (total fund £57,000) has been allocated, with an additional £20,000 via the New Forest National Park Authority for micro and small producers.*
- We're attending and supporting local networking events, including in Lyndhurst.*
- £200,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Fund is funding new programmes (25/26) including start-up and scale-up support, an Apprenticeship Hub, and digital support.*
- We co-sponsored the Hampshire Fare stand at the Speciality & Fine Food Fair in London which showcased 2 NF businesses in collaboration with TVBC and Winchester CC.*
- A sustainability project is being developed to support retail and hospitality businesses with cost-of-living challenges.*
- We promote digital marketing boot camps and are also sponsoring two business awards: one for micro businesses and one for young talent in food and drink.*
- A new Economic Development Strategy is being written and Skills Action Plan in progress.*

- *Our business newsletter, with over 3,000 subscribers, regularly highlights local businesses and developments.*
- *Over the past three years, NFDC's Economic Development service has invested £1.54 million into the local economy through infrastructure and business support.*

Other areas of the Council are also working to improve our high streets, including the work our streetscene team do day in and day out across our district keeping the district clean and tidy. There are also the four days of free parking that have been offered in our towns before Christmas, starting on Small Business Saturday on the 6th December.

I hope Members will agree that this clearly demonstrates our ongoing commitment to supporting and revitalising our high streets.

In response to a supplementary question, asking the Portfolio Holder to support a trial of the first hour free of parking in Fordingbridge, as a special case to support high street recovery, the Portfolio Holder responded acknowledging the debate earlier in the meeting on the matter of one hour free car parking and therefore had nothing more to add.

Question 7

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

Please can you advise the estimated cost of one-hour free parking in NFDC car parks not on sea fronts and in proximity to a high street, for the period from November 1st to February 28th?

Reply

The estimated loss in 1 hour ticket sales would be approximately £120,000 per annum. However, what this doesn't do is take into account customers who currently pay for more than 1 hour, and potentially therefore spend more time in the high streets.

In response to a supplementary question, asking that an hour of free car parking be considered, in particular for the winter months for the next year, in addition to the free parking days and that the financial information be available when setting in the budget for 2026/27, the Portfolio Holder responded noting that the comments would be considered when setting the budget for next year.

Question 8

From Cllr Sean Cullen to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Can I ask you as Leader of NFDC write to NJORD Partners, the organisation who have recently taken over Red Funnel, and therefore ownership of Hythe Ferry, and ask them for clarity on their plans for Hythe Ferry, and urge them to expedite any works on the pontoon to get this valued and strategically important mode of transport back up and running?

Reply

Thank you for raising this matter, I am aware of the keen interest in the Hythe Ferry from the many previous times it has been raised in this Chamber.

I am very happy to write to NJORD Partners, the new owners of Red Funnel and therefore the Hythe Ferry, to request clarity on their plans for the Hythe Ferry service. I am keen from a transparency perspective, for our residents, to get a clear timetable for any works required on the pontoon, as they fall to the owners to fund.

I hope that the new owners will be quick to take the steps they need to; to bring the Hythe Ferry back into operation so it can play a part in the district's transport network and help support local connectivity.

Question 9

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

The majority of our population lives along the Waterside, yet there is still no overarching flood plan or coastal plan for the Waterside. When can we expect one?

Reply

Another return outing for this topic, and understand this is important to you and the residents.

At risk of sounding like a broken record it is the Environment Agency who are responsible for this work, not New Forest District Council.

The Environment Agency has confirmed that a Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for the Lymington to Redbridge coastal frontage, which includes much of the Waterside, is listed in their forward programme of works.

This has a provisional start date of 2027/28 with an estimated delivery period thereafter of 5 years. The strategy is expected to be combined with the plan for the eastern side of Southampton Water, creating a more integrated approach to coastal risk management across the region.

With regard to funding, I would stress that the strategy is not yet funded, the estimated cost is £5 million, and again that is for the Environment Agency to resolve.

This was discussed in detail at the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 19 June 2025, where an EA officer presented the current position. The minutes and recording remain available to you and any other interested members.

In response to a supplementary question regarding how the District Council would ensure that any risk of flooding in the Waterside area would be mitigated against, recognising that there were expected to be large infrastructure projects in the area, the Portfolio Holder explained when the strategy is published, the district council would be fully engaged. It was further highlighted that flooding was in the remit of the Environment Agency.

This page is intentionally left blank