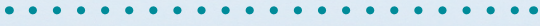




New Forest  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-2024



# A letter from the Leader

This report is the final update on the key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-24. When it was published no one could have predicted what was to come for us all, adapting and overcoming the challenges brought about by the covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, the cost of living and energy crises, and climate change, the last four years have undoubtedly been a difficult time for the council. I am proud of the proactive approach we have taken to the challenges which came our way and the foundations we have laid to build upon over the next four years.

We saw the successful delivery of the 2023 District and Parish Elections, with 48 district councillors and 108 parish councillors elected for a four-year term. The political makeup of the council has changed after these elections, with a reduction in members after the finalisation of the electoral review, and our members representing a broader number of political parties. As Leader I chose the members of my cabinet, assigned their portfolios, and realigned the priorities as committed to in the Corporate Plan 2020-24. A period of induction was welcomed by members both new and returning which culminated in the Service Showcase, an event which provided an opportunity for staff and councillors to meet each other and learn more about what our diverse range of services do.

The cost-of-living crisis, brought about by the national rise in the price of food, utilities, fuel, inflation, and other economic factors, affected our residents this year. Many households found themselves struggling to pay their bills or going without heating or food. We recognise our responsibility to support our residents and provide accessible services to all, including those most in need. A group of officers came together to create an action plan, sharing resources and knowledge to coordinate our approach, activities, and initiatives we are undertaking, to support our residents who are most affected.

Following the government approval of the Solent Freeport in 2022, the programme moved into the delivery phase, a new Chief Executive of the freeport was appointed and priorities were agreed to support economic growth with focus on transport and wider infrastructure, employment



and skills, prosperous communities, environmental sustainability, and the development of a local delivery plan. I am excited for the potential benefits this may bring to the district including a share of a forecasted 7,000 new jobs, significant retained business rates and 303 hectares of developable land.

Looking to the future, a large amount of work has been put in to developing our new Corporate Plan 2024-28, which was adopted in April 2024. The plan outlines how we will conduct ourselves and new ways of working. It also introduces a new set of core values for the organisation. Our elected members, residents, partners, and staff all contributed to its development, which for the first-time included strategy days, staff engagement, gaining feedback from over 130 colleagues and member engagement sessions to inform our priorities. The plan then went through a period of public consultation which received 162 individual responses.

We are realistic about the challenges ahead for the organisation, including advancing technology, potential significant future budget gaps, attracting and retaining staff as well as climate and environmental considerations. In response, an ambitious Transformation Programme, named 'Future New Forest' has been developed and was approved in December 2023, providing a framework to respond to these challenges and setting out how we will transform the council so we can meet customer needs, protect finances, and embed sustainability as we move forward.

As we look to the coming year, we will be celebrating 50 years since New Forest District Council was formed in 1974. This milestone gives us the opportunity to look forward, embrace new ways of working and continue to provide the services our residents value over the next 50 years.

## Cllr Jill Cleary

**Leader of New Forest District Council**

# Portfolio highlights

2023-24

## Leaders

An additional +£216k Rural England Prosperity Fund secured

90.7% website accessibility score

17,000+ subscribers to resident e-newsletter

70+ staff members contributing to a LGA Peer Review of HR department

KPIs on or above target raised to +84%

## Environment and Sustainability

30,000 kilowatt hours of electric vehicle charging per month in our carparks

16 wildflower meadows planted

2 Public Space Protection Orders in force to protect the local landscape and animals

Launched new Garden Waste service

75% of new customers signed up using new online service

Over 20,000 wheeled bins delivered to garden waste residents

## Community, Safety and Wellbeing

4534 attendees to Active Lifestyle classes

100% of high-risk food inspections undertaken

+£277k in community capital, revenue and transport grants awarded

Responded to 2453 fly tipping incidents

98.3% of New Forest residents surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with where they live

80 attendees to the first Community Forum

## Planning and Economy

995 planning decisions issued

£945k spent on recreational mitigation projects

50 businesses engaged with New Forest Apprenticeship and Skills Hub

140 businesses and residents benefitted from start-up business support

£100k in funding secured to improve digital planning processes

## Housing and Homelessness Services

More than 71% of rough sleepers entered housing pathway

Answered +59000 tenants' calls, emails and webchats

54 additional affordable council homes delivered

Retrofitted 67 properties with energy efficiency measures including 30 Air Source Heat Pumps and 30 sets of Photo-Voltaic Panels

Overall tenant satisfaction score of 81%

Increased the energy performance rating of 353 properties

Carried out 18,649 repairs on tenants' properties

## Finance and Corporate Services

Distributed £550,400 of energy rebate support to 1626 households

£7.8m of funding allocated to develop an operational services depot at Hardley Industrial Estate

+6200 responses to customer research informing Transformation Programme

Lowest paid staff paid £11.70 per hour, higher than the national living wage

+£111k distributed through the Household Support Fund to 252 households and issued food vouchers totalling +£455k

£208,018 distributed in Council Tax Support Fund



# Leader's

## Delivering a sustainable and prosperous New Forest and putting our community first

Ensuring the prosperity of the New Forest area remains a priority. An additional +£216,000 of grant awards was secured this year from the Rural England Prosperity Fund investment plan to support community investment improvement projects within the district, with all to be completed by March 2025.

Financed by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation secured last year, work began to design and commence projects including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, shared transport improvements and green skills development.

Activity continued to increase the number of residents signed up to receive updates via the resident email newsletter, including regular promotion on social media, promotion at events such as the new forest show, inclusion in other council correspondence such as the annual electoral canvass or council tax letters and banners installed at information offices. 9.7% (+17,000 subscribers) of residents are now signed up to this service and 25 email bulletins were sent this year, with subjects ranging from the launch of the new Corporate Plan, and incident responses during this years' winter storms.

An online survey to gather feedback on the existing digital experience showed that 84% of respondents agreed it was easy to find the service or information they were looking for. Customers who made contact via the telephone were asked 'what made you call today instead of using an online service' and 47% of respondents (1,300 people) stated that they could not find or do what they needed to online.

In a reflection of the wider local government picture, recruitment and retention remained a challenge for the organisation. The percentage of vacancies filled first time fell to 74% and a number of proactive steps are now being taken to improve this area. This included improvements to our application processes, a new application form, the ability for applicants to upload a CV and covering letter, and a new informative candidate pack with relevant council information in one engaging format. An increased focus

### Priorities 2020-2024

Working with regional and local partners to ensure the prosperity of the New Forest area.

Being an employer of choice.

Excellence in services to our residents and continuing to maintain front line services.

Ensuring effective democratic engagement and representation.

Putting residents at the centre of what we do and how we do it.

Modernising customer services and responding to changing needs.

on the promotion of available roles was also adopted, including an increased use of LinkedIn and other social media platforms, the use of new branding, social media imagery and videos, as well as the attendance by our staff to eight recruitment events throughout the year at schools, colleges, and job centres.

The first annual get together to celebrate long service milestones for colleagues who have been employed for 20/30/40 years was held in December 2023 and gave an opportunity for the Leader, Chairman, Chief Executive, and members of the leadership team to thank our longest serving team members.

A LGA peer review was commissioned to independently appraise our HR service and provide recommendations for improvement. Over 70 employees took part in individual, or group interviews and proposals will be considered as part of the development of the councils' wider people strategy.

Staff engagement continued with Chief Executive staff briefings, 'Monthly Meet' sessions and social events such as the Christmas quiz. The monthly wellbeing walks, introduced in 2022, continued to be well attended and gave an opportunity for staff to meet colleagues from other service areas.

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Portfolio indicators above or on target	%	Monitor	79.25%	84.06%	
Vacancies filled first time	%	85%	83%	74%	
Subscribers to residents' email	% of residents	14%	8.82%	9.7%	
Average customer rating of residents' email (usefulness, ease of understanding, relevant information)	Score out of 10	9	9.33	9.2	
Level of customer satisfaction with council services	%	60%	78%	-*	
Website optimisations resulting in an improved customer experience	Num	4	5	6	
Website accessibility (target is government set benchmark)	%	87%	89%	91%	

\*Expected in the next resident survey



## Planning and Economy

Encouraging development that meets local needs and enhances the special qualities

A CIL framework was adopted to allow funds targeted towards specific infrastructure needs. Officers provided ongoing support to Town and Parish Councils to understand their responsibilities and how to spend their CIL allocations. +£1.4m in CIL was collected this year and +£155,000 was passed to the Town and Parish Councils for them to spend directly on infrastructure that they identify.

+£945,000 was spent on recreational mitigation projects, which included 11 capital projects around the district, and work began towards another 11 for implementation in 2024 / 25. These projects are funded through developer contributions and provide alternative recreational green spaces for existing and future residents of the district.

The Totton Regeneration Partnership was formed, with the aim of realising benefit for the town centre as part of the wider Solent Freeport legacy. Totton town centre will also benefit from £136,000 funding allocated from the UKSPF, towards a number of projects benefitting the town which have a deadline for delivery by Spring 2025.

£100,000 in funding from the government was secured to improve digital planning processes. The funding will help to improve the tools that are used to digitally map data across the district.

Planning Committee members resolved to grant permission, subject to the completion of a legal agreement, on six areas of land within allocated strategic sites across the district, totalling 559 new dwellings. Full permission was granted on four areas of land within the strategic sites.

Approval was granted to commence a formal review of the New Forest Local Plan to align with current legislation and housing requirements. This major piece of work will see benefits across the district, enabling more control of where development can happen and potentially resist inappropriate development on non-allocated sites. The full review will include the preparation of a full evidence base, which will include a housing needs assessment, employment needs assessment, district wide design codes, statement of community involvement and a cross-party working group will be formed to oversee and scrutinise the preparation of the plan.

A new supplementary planning document, 'Planning for Climate Change' was adopted in March 2024. The key objective of the document is to encourage the development industry to maximise renewable uses and minimise expected carbon emissions when designing new buildings, aligning with the council's climate emergency commitments. The document supports the current Local Plan and will provide a basis for more detailed climate policies within the new Local Plan review process.

Work continued towards the adoption of a neighbourhood plan in Ringwood, which sets out local planning policies for the area, with the finalisation of a series of consultation periods. The plan has been independently examined and the

### Priorities 2020-2024

Delivering the vision of the Local Plan and encouraging development that meets local needs and delivers positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes

Working with partners, applicants, and developers to ensure a positive, timely and enabling attitude to development

Working with the Partnership for South Hampshire authorities on a Joint Strategy and Statement of Common Ground to address future growth and unmet housing need

Using contributions to deliver green infrastructure projects that address the impact of development on the natural environment

Ensuring Building Control are engaged at the earliest stage to make future development projects safe

Explore different delivery models to deliver our housing target including maximising the number of affordable homes

Set a vision for the future of each of our towns

Continuing to work with partners and businesses grow the New Forest economy

Lobbying for essential improvements in broadband and mobile connectivity

Helping businesses, industries, and high streets respond to social, environmental, and technological changes and innovation

Supporting the visitor economy across the New Forest district

Continuing to promote the New Forest as a filming destination

recommendation is that the plan should proceed to local referendum in July 2024. In addition both Fawley and Sande Heath were designated as a neighbourhood area and will begin toward the development of their neighbourhood plans.

The council sponsored the 'Best New Forest Micro Business' award at the New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards in December 2023, an annual award ceremony which acknowledge the achievements of New Forest businesses.

Support was offered to local businesses across the district in the form of mystery shopping as part of the 'Shop Doctor' programme where 32 businesses signed up to participate and receive a visit this year. Officers also offered free business advice for new businesses, potential business start-ups and those thinking of becoming self-employed and 140 businesses benefitted from this support this year.

## Planning and Economy (continued)

This year saw the council work in partnership with Solent Business & Skills Solutions to launch the New Forest Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, which provides businesses in the district with free advice about apprenticeships and skills training. Launching in February 2024 the scheme had a positive start with 50 businesses signing up.

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Number of houses completed each year (as set out in the Annual Authority Monitoring Report)	Num	400	193	-*	
Number of green infrastructure projects delivered each year	Num	3	5	3	
Number of Biodiversity Net Gain projects delivered each year	Num	-	15	-**	
Additional employment floorspace created within the district	m <sup>2</sup>	-	3,491m <sup>2</sup> (net)	-*	
New Forest District Council building control market share	%	55%	58%	56%	
Determination of planning applications within the nationally prescribed time frames	%	Major 60%, Minor 70%, Other 85%	Major 100%, Minor 81%, Other 86%	Major 86%, Minor 94%, Other 97%	
Number of projects that New Forest District Council are involved in to deliver sustainable transport options	Num	-	13	13	
Business engaged in the business engagement programme	Num	100	357	159	
Film:New Forest - Value of filming in the district	£	£75,000	£245,300	£63,000	
Subscribers to 'Helping local businesses grow' e-newsletter	Num	3,000	3,566	3,508	
New Forest locations available to film and TV productions via Film:New Forest location database	Num	80	107	112	

\*Expected July 2024

\*\*Not available. Position reviewed for 24/25 based on national guidance



## Housing and Homelessness Services

Creating balanced communities and housing options that

The housing teams continue to work towards the strategic objectives set in the Housing Strategy 2018, as well as the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019, Private Sector Housing Strategy 2020 - 24, and the Greener Housing Strategy 2022.

At the end of March 2024 there were 45 households living in emergency accommodation which is a significant reduction from the peak of over 90 households in June 2022. The key reasons for evictions and homelessness were due to rent increases and affordability, as well as an increase in the end of private sector housing tenancies due to properties being sold.

Reducing rough sleeping continues to be a key area of focus for the housing teams and 37 rough sleepers were identified and supported into accommodation throughout the year. Ex-Rough sleepers who now are in accommodation benefit from ongoing support from specialist teams set up over the corporate plan period, which includes, onsite support workers, dedicated outreach workers and a specialist mental health worker, leading national best practice as a result.

An ongoing grant funded project to house ex-offenders set a target to accommodate 24 individuals in 2 years. Since the project started in October 2023 nine clients have been successfully housed and now live independently. A proactive approach is used to seek private rented accommodation and provide ongoing support to clients to open bank accounts and deal with referrals to specialist services as appropriate to support tenancy sustainment.

Penman House in Totton was completed on the site of the former Testwood Social Club. This development has 12 flats which meet the government's proposed Future Homes Standard, funded in part by a £684,000 Homes England grant.

Plans have been furthered on the former Hythe Medical Centre site. Demolition and clearance have begun to make way for 22 houses and flats. This stage has been fully funded by HM Government through the Brownfield Land Release Fund, following the successful award of £324,000 under the One Public Estate programme earlier this summer.

The purchase of 16 homes was completed in Fordingbridge, which are to be used for rent or shared ownership. The shared ownership properties proved highly sought after and five sold quickly on a first come first served basis.

Significant improvement works to two properties in East Boldre were completed. Significant improvement works to 2 properties in East Boldre were completed. These were 2 structurally unsound three-bedroom properties which have been reconfigured to maximise space and install Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP). Further housing developments are under construction in New Milton, and Totton.

### Priorities 2020-2024

Enabling the best use of housing to meet the needs of people, including support for a high quality, strong private rented sector

Improving the housing circumstances of those most in need

Increasing the supply of high-quality affordable homes.

Meeting local housing needs and promoting sustainable growth

30 Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) and multiple energy efficiency measures were installed this year towards the target of retrofitting 70 homes by 31 March 2025, funded by £500,000 from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). A resident survey of the properties with ASHPs newly installed under the previous wave of grant funding was conducted this year. Respondents said they would recommend the take-up of this type of heating and were happy with their installation and follow up service. Most said they understood how to use their heat pump and that it was easy to heat their home and was not too noisy.

We have committed to all council homes having an EPC rating of C, or better by 2030. 353 homes received work which improved their energy performance. These day-to-day repairs and maintenance activities are contributing to the council's target, with a further 100 homes receiving complex energy upgrades in the next year (2024 / 25).

A free to use online tool was launched, 'Cosy Homes New Forest' for private homeowners and landlords to find out how to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and create a refurbishment plan to make homes warmer, reduce carbon footprint, and cut energy bills.

Supporting around 5,200 tenants or leaseholders, a new Tenant Engagement Strategy was approved after consultation, setting clear priorities of listening to our tenants, putting tenants first, knowing our tenants and supporting engagement and how we communicate with tenants.

A £1.8 million Government grant was received to provide 12 resettlement homes for Ukrainian and Afghan families, which were delivered alongside the purchase of 14 ex-council homes as part of the council's development programme.

Housing landlord teams developed an innovative software partnership to design and develop a bespoke housing management software system, integrating with all other housing software modules to allow housing register applicants one journey through the service's software to become a social housing tenant. The solution will go to market in the coming year.

The onset of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and enhanced powers granted to the Regulator for

## Housing and Homelessness Services (continued)

Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman saw the housing team fully prepare the service for the start of new consumer standards, tenant satisfaction measures and new regulations from April 2024.

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Additional council homes delivered by 2026 (cumulative figures)	Num	600	50 (285)	54 (339)	
Additional affordable homes delivered by others	Num	60	51	79	
Prevention duty cases successfully prevented	%	50%	56%	51%	
Private sector property inspections resulting in Category 1 hazards	%	<40%	24%	27%	
Rough sleepers entering accommodation pathway	%	32%	70.25%	71%	
Households in external emergency B&B accommodation	Num	<70	49	45	





## Finance and Corporate Services

Enabling service provision and ensuring value for money for the council taxpayer

A balanced budget for 2024 / 25 was set in February 2024 with a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, in line with government parameters before the threshold is met to trigger a referendum. The council's Medium Term Financial Plan was updated as a part of that budget setting report, and actions are underway to address the forecast deficit.

The general fund budget outturn saw a saving of 8.1% for year, which includes a £668,000 one off VAT refund and an additional £2 million being generated through treasury management investments.

A Transformation Programme - 'Future New Forest' was approved this year, investing in the council's people and services, protecting the financial position, and embedding sustainability throughout. Development of the strategy was informed by customer research which included 73 public surveys, 14 attendees at focus groups held in three locations, 118 website surveys, 4,000 telephone and walk in surveys and 2,000 emails analysed. Subject to the approval of an invest-to-save business case, circa £1.75m in cost efficiency savings are forecast to be released by programme activities over the next three financial years. Key priorities and performance indicators of the programme underpin the new Corporate Plan and will reshape the way the organisation operates. Recruitment of a team of officers to support the programme has begun, creating six new jobs for the organisation.

A review of council accommodation began, with an initial budget approved of £100,000, to look at how and where we work to ensure we are accessible to residents across the district, as well as using our assets in the most sustainable way.

Both residential and commercial property investment projects have been paused this year, save for exceptional opportunities. Since April 2023 there have been no further offers or purchases because of increased interest rates and the lack of suitable properties in the market.

£7.8 million of funding was allocated to develop an operational services depot at Hardley Industrial Estate. The scheme will serve as an operational centre for the east of the district and will comprise of storage, fuelling, fleet washing facilities, maintenance workshop and office units.

A review of the council's approach to risk management was carried out, supported by the Audit Committee. Each identified risk was reviewed and evaluated on its potential impact on the council. A new Strategic Risk Register was approved in September 2023. This working document records challenges and risks faced by the council and helps plan the direction taken in mitigating those risks.

A new business rate relief policy was approved in November 2023 to support local businesses and organisations, which outlines factors which will be considered as part of an application for rate relief for National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates). This policy

### Priorities 2020-2024

Protecting front line services through sound financial planning, including the collection of taxation with appropriate support for individuals and businesses

Using investments to support financial resilience and the local economy

Modernisation and innovative use of ICT to enhance operational efficiencies across all services

Providing support to residents with benefits and welfare reforms and supporting businesses to access financial reliefs and grants

carefully balances the potential benefit to the community, with the cost to council taxpayers by ensuring that funds are allocated and used in the most effective and economic way.

The Digital Strategy 2022-2025 continued, putting 'Customer first, digital by design' through delivery of the ICT project work programme and operation of our server and software platforms.

Significant work has taken place this year including the use of Microsoft 365 functionality across all services, the migration of our servers to Microsoft Azure, reporting and dashboards using Power BI, development of the Newforest.gov website and new SharePoint intranet (New Forestnet), a modern audio / visual suite in our council chamber, the launch of a new learning management system and phase 1 of the waste operations system to deliver digital garden waste services.

A decision was taken to support the five leisure centres within the district with exceptional and unforeseen utility costs. The Council and its Leisure Service Operator continue to work on reducing consumption through schemes designed to promote energy efficiency, including for example the replacement of the end-of-life boilers at New Milton Health and Leisure being replaced this year with more energy efficient air-source heat pumps. £277,000 funding from Sport England was secured through the Swimming Pool Support Fund for Revenue and Capital Investments to further mitigate increasing energy costs, as a result, solar panels and shower restrictors will be installed at Applemore Health and Leisure during 2024 / 25.

Capital investment by Freedom Leisure for completed and forthcoming projects stood at +£3.8 million with all five centres benefitting from investment and upgrade.

A national pay award was agreed this year adding an additional £1,925 to all spinal column points (SCP) up to no.47, with those SCPs above 47 having a pay increase of 3.88%, whilst chief executive and chief officer pay was raised by 3.5%. This brought our lowest paid staff to £11.70 per hour, higher than the national living wage.

## Finance and Corporate Services (continued)

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Achieved a balanced budget with reasonable council tax increases	% / £	Greater of 2% or £5	2.99% / £5.63 (23/24 budget)	2.99% / £5.80 (24/25 budget)	Green
General Fund budget variations	%	+/-3%	-2.74%	-8.1%	Yellow
HRA Fund budget variations	%	+/-3%	-3.89%	-0.04%	Green
Value of Original Capital programme delivered	%	80%	84%	81%	Green
Increase in the value of residential investment	£m	£8m	£5.1m	-**	Grey
Increase in the value of commercial investment	£m	£30m	£29.3m*	-**	Grey
Maintain high level of Council Tax collected	%	98.50%	98.56%	98.56%	Green
Maintain high level of NNDR collected	%	98.50%	98.83%	98.96%	Green
ICT incidents resolved with SLA	%	95%	96.8%	98.8%	Green
Level of investment in the leisure centres by Freedom Leisure (cumulative)	£	£3.554m	£2.095m	£3.86 million	Green

\*Reported figure includes invoiced and committed amounts for Platinum Jubilee Development.

\*\* Projects on pause.



## Community, Safety and Wellbeing

Engaging with our communities, improving health and wellbeing, and maintaining the quality of the place in which they live

Community grants were awarded this year to 29 local groups, comprising of £130,000 in revenue grants and £96,040 in capital grants, as well as community transport grants totalling £51,100. The grant funding totalling over £277k will go to a wide range of organisations from across the district who support the most vulnerable residents and communities. £190,542 funding was also provided to Citizens Advice New Forest who provide free advice and information to our residents.

Support continued for nine weekly food larders and five community hubs across the district with officer attendance to provide advice and information. Working with partners the council continues to chair a bi-monthly New Forest Partnership meeting and attend the Local Childrens Partnership. A directory of support organisations contact details was compiled and widely distributed.

East Boldre Baptist Church has been transformed into new community store which opened in February 2024, supported by a grant of £17,000 from the council. The community store provides residents with a local facility for food shopping, postal and banking services, employment and volunteering opportunities, and a space for communal activities. The store is operated as a not-for-profit, with reinvestment back into the business or used for community causes.

£300,000 capital funding, and a further £54,000 funded by the Home Office Safer Streets Fund, has been earmarked for the expansion of the current CCTV system to provide enhanced crime prevention measures with a particular focus on rural communities. In February 2024 a trial took place of new camera technology in Fordingbridge with a view to roll-out across the district over the next two years as part of continued efforts to maintain security for residents, businesses, and visitors.

A new 'Supporting our Residents' Action Plan was agreed in March 2024 outlining plans and initiatives for the next two years. Key themes include supporting people on low incomes, strengthening families and communities, promoting employment opportunities, addressing the high cost of housing, and improving the health and wellbeing for people on low incomes.

A team from the Safer New Forest Partnership carried out community engagement events across the district throughout the spring and summer and completed 412 surveys across 12 events. 98.3% of the 405 New Forest residents surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with where they live. This year's Safer New Forest Partnership strategic assessment showed a 27% decrease in antisocial behaviour.

Throughout the year work continued to install two new changing places toilets in Ringwood and Brockenhurst, with both expected to be fully operational early in 2024. Both installations have been funded by the Department

### Priorities 2020-2024

Working with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents

Ensuring that public health prevention principles are embedded within core services of the council

Increasing the level of physical activity within the district

Providing affordable, accessible, and sustainable leisure facilities

Ensuring regulatory services are delivered for the benefit of our residents

Ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit

Engaging with partners and the community to inform and contribute towards wider outcomes

Supporting the arts and cultural heritage of the New Forest

for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities to improve access to suitable facilities for disabled people who are living in or visiting the district. These new sites join the four existing facilities across the district.

The public convenience replacement programme continued and the newly installed 'beach hut' style public toilets at Barton on Sea were opened this year. These bright coloured facilities were chosen to provide a contrast for those with visual impairments and are specially coated to offer resilience against coastal conditions. In addition, external lighting is powered with integrated solar tiles.

The food safety team completed its post covid recovery plan to inspect all high and medium risk food businesses. Support has been offered to new food businesses and a new programme of inspections began, prioritising poorly performing establishments, and 636 inspections, 34 re-inspections and 248 registrations of new businesses were carried out during the year.

The Air Quality Management Area in Lyndhurst was revoked last summer following air quality objectives being met for Nitrogen Oxide. Work is progressing on developing an Air Quality Strategy for the whole district, which by working with Stakeholders, will identify actions to continue to improve air quality.

An upgrade to Appletree Careline was completed, moving to a new digital platform, offering an enhanced future proof service to customers. The number of Appletree Careline services provided to customers at the end of March 2024 was 3,443. These services aim to allow customers to maintain their independence and offer peace of mind for both them and their relatives.

As of March 2024, there were 435 members on the Active Lifestyles referral scheme across the five health and leisure

## Community, Safety and Wellbeing (continued)

centres (operated by Freedom Leisure), this number has increased consistently month on month since January 2023 when the figure stood at 279 members. Provision has been increased at a number of sites by around 30 hours per week to support demand and reduce waiting times.

Fitness memberships across the five health and leisure centres rose by 26% from 5,966 (March 2023) to 7,498 (March 2024) and around 78% of swim school places were utilised by local residents. Overall participation increased from around 110,000 visits to the centres in March 2023 to over 140,000 in March 2024.

The Health and Wellbeing action plan was updated to include new projects which included work with town councils and Hampshire County Council's public health team to develop two sensory walks in the district, launched as part of mental health week.

Although the data, as reported by Sport England as part of the annual Active Lives survey suggests a 4.2% rise in inactivity levels, this is not significant from base line trend figures. 2022 / 23 reported figures represented an increase, and it is likely that this was due to higher levels of activity in the years following the Covid pandemic. 2023 / 24 data shows 67% of residents are active, which is in line with neighbouring Hampshire authorities.

£250,000 funding was allocated towards a new 3G artificial sports pitch in Fordingbridge, benefitting local schools, local football and rugby clubs as well as being open for

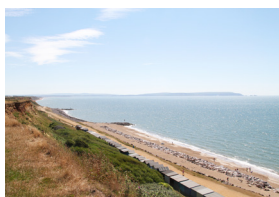
community events. This has been funded through housing developers in the town, who are required to contribute, per each new house built, towards new playing pitch provisions and associated facilities.

Work began towards improvement works in Calshot at St Georges Hall. Recognising the isolated location of this community and the need for improved facilities, funding of £375,000 was secured to carry out this project which will commence in May 2024.

The first community forum saw 80 attendees in October 2023 and welcomed partners, charity and faith groups and town and parish councils to come together to tackle the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis and share information. A second forum was held in March 2024 with the theme of community resilience to assist communities in preparing, responding and recovering from adverse incidents.

10 arts and culture projects were commissioned or co-commissioned this year using funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, these projects worked with local creatives and communities and reached over 25,000 people. In addition, support for Folio continued, which provides networking opportunities, training, advice and signposting to 16 cultural organisations, over 200 freelancers and community group throughout the district.

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Participation in Community Safety engagement events and completion of annual crime and disorder survey	Num	400	529	412	Green
Residents' satisfaction on the low level of reported crime and anti-social behaviour within the district	%	95%	96%	98%	Green
Inactivity levels	%	Monitor	18.4%	22.6%	Red
Support Communities through programmes to improve the mental wellbeing of residents (cumulative)	Num	3	5	4	Green
Increase the engagement with lower socio-economic communities (cumulative)	Num	3	6	4	Green
Sedentary adults with recognised medical conditions enrolled in the Freedom Leisure Active Lifestyles referral programme	Num	100	347	435	Green
Inspections of higher risk and non-compliant food businesses to improve public safety	%	98%	100%	100%	Green



## Environment and Sustainability

**Working to reduce the impact on our special environment and protecting communities by managing our changing coastlines**

Two Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) came in to force in July 2023. These orders ban the lighting of fires and BBQs and protect New Forest animals by banning feeding and petting or touching. The council has worked with the New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry England and the Verderers to enforce and educate the public around the new orders and how they can help protect the New Forest while they spend time here.

Work continued towards the delivery of the commitments of the Waste Strategy, which was approved in 2022 and aims to increase recycling rates and reduce waste and carbon emissions. A waste collection policy was approved in preparation for the rollout of the new service, planned for 2025. Procurement of goods and services continued, and the government provided £1.8m of capital funding for food waste vehicles and containers to support delivery. .

Over 20,000 wheeled bins, made with 95% recycled polymer, were delivered to properties across the district as part of the new garden waste service. Following phase one of the roll out of a new digital waste operational service this year, customers could sign up online to receive garden waste collections and 75% of customers chose this method.

The i-Tree tool was purchased this year which monitors the measurement and holistic value of the district's tree stock, including impacts on ecosystem and carbon reduction. Currently the ambitious 2:1 ratio of trees planted for every tree removed from council-maintained land is not being met. All available land is being considered for planting along with environmental benefits and a 'right tree, right place' approach has been adopted. A new Lyndhurst site opened in November 2023, for the storage and maintenance of young trees prior to their planting within the district, which reduces carbon emissions from long journeys to and from nursery sites.

A trial participation in the national 'No Mow May' campaign saw areas across the district left to grow throughout the spring. A total of 1.2km<sup>2</sup> across a 300mile<sup>2</sup> area was left to encourage vegetation growth, food for pollinators and a reduction in the council's carbon footprint. Learnings from this trial will inform the 2024 / 25 spring approach including wider promotion of the benefits of the campaign. Open Spaces teams also planted 16 wildflower meadows to support the biodiversity of the district.

Work continued between Street Scene and Enforcement colleagues to follow up on any evidence found when dealing with incidents of fly tipping. Swift action and an investigation by the Enviro Crime team led to Fixed Penalty Notices totalling £2,000 being issued, with a £400 fine handed to each of the five individuals identified from evidence found at a large fly tip of mixed waste on Park Lane, Holbury in late February 2024.

### Priorities 2020-2024

Ensuring sustainability is at the centre of our decisions to preserve resources and the environment for future generations

Working with others to protect and enhance our natural environment

Reducing waste and increasing recycling

Developing plans and funding opportunities to protect our coastline

Supporting sustainability and the local economy through the strategic review and use of car parking assets

Developing a strategy for our assets at Keyhaven, considering environmental objectives, flood protection and the local economy

Ensuring our open space is clean, accessible, and well maintained, and contributes to the sustainable and natural environment of the New Forest

A Behavioural Insights trial was commenced this year funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to reduce littering on the A35 between Lymington and Christchurch. The campaign aims to discourage people from throwing litter from their vehicles and help maintain a high 'litter score'.

Response to the climate emergency, led by the climate and nature emergency action plan, continued and associated risks have been added to the corporate strategic risk register. Work to improve the efficiency of council services has also been an area of focus, for example, retro fit improvements of housing stock, zero carbon gloves for operational staff and improvements to the energy efficiency of our corporate buildings. New Forest District Council was ranked the second highest of the Hampshire authorities in the Climate Action Scorecards where all authorities were surveyed by Climate Emergency UK to assess actions taken. We also supported the creation of the New Forest Community Energy Partnership, which aims to improve energy capacity and resilience across the district.

Almost half of fast electric vehicle chargers installed in council run car parks have been upgraded to rapid chargers to help motorists charge their electric vehicles quicker and to increase availability of the charging points. Work began this year on a project to install electric vehicle hubs at two car parks in Ringwood and Lymington, which will install 20 rapid chargers across the two sites in early 2024 / 25. Almost 30,000 kilowatt hours of electric vehicle charging is undertaken in council run car parks every month.

## Environment and Sustainability (continued)

Winning second place for best large trade stand, 'Caring for the Climate' was the theme of this year's New Forest Show presentation in July 2023, showing the impacts of climate change on our coastline. Visitors took part in climate themed games and activities, as well as making pledges for the environment. Sustainability was carefully considered through all aspects of the planning for the show, reusing and repurposing items and using items made from sustainable materials.

Key performance indicators	Unit	Target	2022/23	2023/24	RAG
Trees removed from NFDC land	Num	-	314	549	
Trees planted on NFDC land	Num	-	296*	150	
Total fly tipping incidents responded to	Num	-	2552	2453	
Specialist fly tipping incidents responded to**	Num	-	26	25	
Household waste sent for reuse, recycling, and composting	%	55%	33.4%	34%	
Number of electric charging points	Num	10	12	8	
Total CO <sup>2</sup> emissions saved through electric charging points	kg	9,250kg	18,000kg	***	

\*Figure includes 60 trees planted for Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee and 236 trees as part of 2:1. 700 whips were additionally planted as part of Jubilee celebration.

\*\*'Specialist fly tipping' refers to the incidents that have health or other implications, and require specialists (e.g., asbestos, or clinical waste).

\*\*\*Data unavailable