

Copythorne Annual Parish Meeting – April 30th 2024

Item 4 – District Councillor Report – Cllr. Derek Tipp

NFDC Council Report 2024

The District Council continues to be financially sound with a balanced budget for the coming year. The NFDC council tax for this year is £3.83 per week for a band D property. I hope you agree that is pretty good value!

There is still concern over a shortfall in 2027, but that is expected to be addressed by increasing income from fees and charges and cutting the costs of service delivery through the use of IT. Our own assets, such as Appletree Court, are being appraised to see if they can be used to increase revenue by renting out a part of it. We are also purchasing carefully selected property such as the Salisbury Road Precinct in Totton, which is to be refurbished. There are other business premises like the New Forest Enterprise Centre at Hounsdown with units for start-up businesses and Crow Lane industrial units in Ringwood as well as several more.

Our waste collection service is undergoing a major change due to government legislation requiring us to collect food waste separately on a weekly basis. We are expecting to start this in 2026, provided the facility to dispose of it is ready. This year residents who sign up for garden waste are being provided with wheelie bins. Next year we will be changing from a sack collection to an alternate week wheelie bin service. One week is for recycling and the next week is for non-recycling.

The Council is trying to encourage people not to throw litter out of cars with a new “game approach” on the A35. There are two scoreboards one at the Lyndhurst end and one at Hinton displaying the “litter score”. The rating will be from A (good) to D (bad), with an overall percentage score on display based on how much litter is on the roadside. The higher the score, the less litter. The scheme is set to last until September.

A number of grant schemes have been run by the Council over the past year to support both community projects and local businesses. Much of the funding has come from the government. Funding is also being directed to improving our town centres, with a particular focus on Totton where £136,000 is to be spent on a number of small schemes this summer. A Partnership Board is looking at the possibility of putting forward more ambitious ideas for the medium and longer term, in the hope of attracting funding from the Freeport.

The Solent Freeport has now been established and includes a number of key areas in our district called Tax Sites which are expected to attract new and expanded businesses with a range of tax advantages. The retained business rates from this growth can be used to benefit our district over the coming years.

CCTV cameras have been increased and upgraded across the district. This will help the police as well as deterring criminal behaviour.

Several schemes have been implemented to encourage businesses to start and grow using government funding. A new Apprenticeship and Skills scheme is free to all businesses who are looking to take on new apprentices. Information on the New Forest Apprenticeship & Skills Hub can be found at <https://newforest.gov.uk/article/3520/New-Forest-Apprenticeship-and-Skills-Hub>

Planning in the National Park is not the responsibility of NFDC, but it is worth noting that both are reviewing their Local Plans. Most new house building will take place outside the National Park, but it will undoubtedly affect us all in terms of increased traffic, pressure on health provision, etc. Our housing provision, as calculated by the government's formula, is likely to increase substantially to around 1000 homes a year from its present figure of around 500. I hope that we will be able to reduce that by demonstrating that it is not realistic to build that many in such a constrained area. It is worth noting that BCP Council has just submitted its final draft plan which shows a 1200 a year shortfall on the formula number. It will be interesting to see what the Planning Inspector makes of it!