

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NFALC)**Minutes of the General Meeting of the New Forest Association of
Local Councils held at NFDC Lyndhurst 20 April 2023 at 6.00pm**

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Name</u>
Brockenhurst	John Korbey (NFALC Vice Chairman)
Copythorne	Graham Chillcott
East Boldre	Mike Husband
Hordle	Maggie Hill
Lyndhurst	George Bisson (NFALC Chairman)
	Jeannie Smith
	Brice Stratford
Minstead	Richard Taylor
	Bill Andrews
Netley Marsh	Mike Welbourn
New Milton	Graham Flexman (NFALC Coordinator)
Ringwood	John Hayward
Sway	Peter Dance
NFDC	Diane Andrews, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration & Infrastructure
<u>Apologies:</u>	
Bramshaw	Sue Bennison
Fawley	Stephanie Bennett
Fordingbridge	Rachel Edwards
NFDC	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive
NFDC	Cllr David Russell, Portfolio Holder for People & Places

1. Chairman's Announcements

Chairman welcomed 13 attendees from 11 councils including a representative from NFDC, re-iterating that NFALC will need a new Chairman from its AGM on 20 July 2023 and *inter alia* a new HALC Board Director as Cllr George Bisson is not standing for re-election in May, albeit John Korbey confirmed a willingness to continue as Vice-Chairman of NFALC.

As Chairman's final meeting, an **Annual Review** (attached) was circulated at the meeting.

2. Minutes

Chairman referred to Appendix 1, being Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2023. The minutes were approved by those present and Chairman signed them as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

Chairman referred to Minute 8 and the **HALC Hybrid EGM** held on 23 February. as below:

“Hampshire ALC recently held a hybrid Extraordinary General Meeting on Thursday 23rd February 2023, to consider the adoption of revised Articles of Association. The Articles of Association are the governing documents of our limited company. There were 59 delegates in attendance (15 face to face and the remainder online), 52 of whom were eligible to vote as there is only one vote per council. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who attended. The Companies Act treats changes to articles as a special motion, which requires 75% of eligible members to vote in favour of the change. Although on the night a significant majority (64%) of votes were in favour of accepting the revised articles put forward by the directors, it did not reach the 75% required by the Companies Act. The matter will now be returned to the Hampshire ALC Board, to consider what further action, if any they wish to take, and we will report back to Members in due course.”

4. New Forest District Council

Cllr Diane Andrews, NFDC Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration & Infrastructure referred to NFDC bringing in new powers to ban the lighting of fires in the open Forest and the feeding and petting of Forest animals. The **Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)** in respect of the lighting of fires and barbecues in the open Forest, and the feeding and petting of Forest animals, were agreed at the NFDC Cabinet meeting held on 5 April 2023.

The consultation, carried out in December 2022 to January 2023, found that 95% and 91% respectively agreed with the PSPOs. At the Cabinet meeting held on 5 April 2023, it was agreed that, based on the 125-page evidence presented, the relevant legal tests had been met and that it was appropriate to proceed with introduction of PSPOs from 1 July 2023.

Cllr Andrews also referred to a 105-page report that the Cabinet considered regarding the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) **“Planning for Climate Change”** to be published for a six-week public consultation in May 2023. The SPD will be used in the determination of planning applications for the construction of new homes, commercial and community buildings. The SPD provides guidance on interpretation and implementation of policies in the adopted Local Plan 2016-2036, covering Planning Strategy, in particular, Policies for Achieving sustainable development, Design quality and local distinctiveness.

Taken together, these policies require that new development is future-proofed for **climate change** and incorporate design measures to improve resource efficiency, climate change resilience and reduce environmental impacts. The key objectives of this SPD are to encourage the development industry to take all reasonable steps to minimise expected carbon emissions when designing and constructing new buildings, and to make new development more sustainable and climate change adapted.

Cabinet also reviewed and noted the contents of the **Strategic Risk Register** as part of its 6 monthly review process, capturing the most significant cross cutting risks to the delivery of the current Corporate Plan and proposed actions to mitigate risks. Cabinet also noted the proposed mechanism for the allocation of the Rural England Prosperity Fund, agreeing an Investment Plan for Community Infrastructure Improvements locally.

The **Rural England Prosperity Fund** is a top-up to the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** (UKSPF) launched by Government in April 2022 as part of its **Levelling Up agenda**. The Rural Fund allocation for the New Forest is £540,115. Some £216,046 of the Rural England Prosperity Fund has been allocated towards capital improvements across rural community venues. Work is underway to ascertain those most isolated communities.

Cabinet also considered a report on the Levelling up and **Regeneration Bill** and approved the suggested approach to the Council's response to the Reform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation and delegated authority to the Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure to make minor amendments to the response.

Cabinet considered a report proposing the delivery of **projects identified as 'quick wins'**, supporting in principle six Design Principles which set the vision for Totton and it was agreed that further consultation take place to seek views from key stakeholders such as Totton Town Council, Hampshire County Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Team.

Cabinet also supported more detailed technical work, as set out in the report to progress a **Regeneration Plan for Totton** which will also inform future Local Plan work. A Community Engagement exercise was undertaken across the summer of 2022. The exercise explored ways in which Totton town centre could be improved.

The level of response received demonstrated the passion and strength of feeling the community has for Totton. The work identified a number of quick wins that can be worked up into projects. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocated £220,000 for Totton Town Centre Improvements with the schemes proposed including activities such as one-off markets and cultural events with early pilots in Totton.

5. Elections 2023

Members noted the remaining timetable ahead of the local elections on **Thursday 4 May**.

6. New Forest National Park

The Chairman updated the meeting as follows regarding main matters of interest to NPA:

NPA set out their concerns on the **Investment Zone** proposals in a letter to the Secretary of State and it was subsequently decided by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement not to take them forward. Regards **Solent Freeport**, the NPA are maintaining contact with its Board to ensure ongoing focus on the green pledges contained within the bid and to secure benefits for the Forest and its communities.

NPA is pleased that the Verderers of the New Forest **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)** scheme which supports conservation grazing and vital conservation projects in the New Forest, has been extended for a further five years. However, it is a time of transition and uncertainty for the Forest as we move towards the full domestic agricultural policy in 2024.

NPA resources were given a welcome boost at the beginning of March, with the award of a one-off £440,000 of additional funding from Defra. Whilst a welcome and timely announcement, our core Defra grant has almost halved in real terms since 2010.

NPA is on course to spend the Defra **Access for All** infrastructure fund, having purchased eight specialist bikes for Pedall and expanding community reach through the new Ashurst base. **Pedall** rides have recommenced from the original base at Burley, and now Ashurst.

Permitted Development Rights: including temporary recreational campsites, eg. in national parks. Proposal to allow the temporary placement of up to 30 tents at any one time on land for up to 60 days a year, and for moveable structures on the land related to the campsite use, such as portable toilets. The right is not proposed to allow for the siting of caravans, motorhomes and campervans. This consultation closes on 25 April 2023.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Proposed revisions / further amendments to national planning policy. NPA response highlighted some concern over the introduction of new National Development Management Policies (which would supersede adopted local planning policies once published), while also highlighting sections of the National Parks Circular which could be raised in profile as part of the reforms to national policy.

Replacement planning system: This remains a full-time job for 1FTE of the team. NPA are working with the planning teams to amend and enhance what was originally set up, complete the TPO module, develop the monitoring module and enforcement / pre-applications Citizen Portals. Weekly meetings have been taking place with the software provider to iron out issues identified post go live, progress has been made. Following a full re-upload of the address base there are noticeable improvements with the 'gazeteer' and changes made by the software provider to the server configuration that hosts the Citizen Portal has improved the speed and response.

7. **Hampshire Association of Local Councils** - Chairman referred to Appendix 2, and said:

“As regards my NFNPA membership elections are now due. The parishes in each quadrant will have a vote to choose a candidate, assuming there is one. The count will be carried out by HALC on 20th June. The name of the successful candidate will then be forwarded to the Secretary of State for approval. Provided there are no problems that person will be appointed for four years. I have been advised that even though I shall no longer be a Parish Councillor after 4th May my position with the NFNPA will continue until the new candidate is formally appointed. I do not see any reason why the same could not apply to NFALC with the new Chairman being appointed at the AGM with myself continuing until that time. That is something I would be happy to do.”

8. **Cycling Events**

Richard Taylor said he will be standing back from his Cycling Rep role after forthcoming elections but will discuss handover with any keen Cllr/cyclist who supports cycling events. Co-ordinator said he would forward details of the following event to all NFALC addresses:

Garmin Rideout 2023 - 20 August 2023 (800 riders expected)

Starting from Moyles Court School, Moyles Court, Rockford, Ringwood, BH24 3NF

9. **AOB**

Graham Chillcott explained the trials and tribulations of recent Southern Water pipe works along the main road through **Copythorne** that continue to blight their local neighbourhood.

Reference was made to **Wessex Internet** forthcoming high-speed broadband as attached.

The Chairman said we are now looking for nominees for HALC Director / NFALC Chair and NFALC Cycling Representative to take over these roles from 20 July 2023, as below.

10. **Next Meeting: Annual General Meeting Lyndhurst, Thursday 20 July 2023 at 6.00pm.**

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the Meeting just before 7.00 pm.

Chairman

Date

New Forest Association of Local Councils

ANNUAL REVIEW – 2022/23

Cllr George Bisson from Lyndhurst Parish Council was unanimously re-elected Chairman of NFALC at its AGM on 14 July 2022 at the Council Chamber, Appletree Court in Lyndhurst

At its **AGM on 14 July 2022**, the Chairman introduced and very much welcomed **Kate Ryan**, the Chief Executive of NFDC. Kate had then been in post over 6 months and was pleased to attend her first NFALC meeting and was delighted to join New Forest District Council leading their ambitious agenda to deliver excellent services and opportunities for the residents of the New Forest. Kate previously worked as Strategic Director at Poole for Place, then Chief Operating Officer at BCP Council, bringing together four Council's services through Local Government Review.

NFDC recently undertook a **Residents Survey**, asking what they think of current services, what they would like to see by way of neighbourhood services, future growth from a pared down authority comprising 48 Cllrs from next year, rather than the present 60 members. NFDC are also looking at training and development of staff, new ways of hybrid working, consultation, engagement with local residents. Kate will be the Returning Officer for elections on 4 May 2023.

Steve Avery, Executive Director the New Forest National Park Authority, announced NFDC with support from partners are looking at the feasibility of making **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** to address persistent 'anti-social' behaviour and misuse of the Forest. The campaign to ban disposable BBQs and stop petting and feeding of commoners' animals in the New Forest will be helped by PSPOs.

At our **20 October 2022 meeting**, Cllr Michael Harris, Portfolio Holder for Business, Tourism & High Streets referred to several new initiatives by NFDC in support of the local economy and its high streets. For example, NFDC recently purchased a purpose-built supermarket in New Milton town centre (M&S) as part of its approach to investment in the local economy. The newly refurbished store is leased to and occupied by Marks and Spencer Food. Having been empty for many years since it was a Co-Op, NFDC were extremely keen to see this site be brought back into use.

Also at our October meeting, we heard New Forest District Council leader, Cllr Edward Heron had written to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in response to the call for expressions of interest to become an **Investment Zone** which was announced by government on 24 September 2022. The letter reiterates that as a partner in the **Solent Freeport**, New Forest District Council is keen to secure the greatest benefits for their residents, as well as the local area.

At our **2 February 2023 meeting**, NPA set out their concerns on the **Investment Zone** proposals as discussed at the October Authority meeting in a letter to the Secretary of State and it was subsequently decided by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement not to take them forward. **Solent Freeport** was finally launched in December and NPA are maintaining contact with its Board to ensure ongoing focus on the green pledges contained within the bid and to secure benefits for the Forest and its communities.

The Chairman welcomed Kate Ryan, NFDC Chief Executive who referred to **Residents Survey** results: **Reputation** – NFDC scored significantly higher than the LGA average with 93% of respondents satisfied with the area as a place to live, 78% with the way NFDC runs things and 74% trusted NFDC. **Service satisfaction** - Top-rated services were registering to vote (96%), community recycling banks (90%), garden waste collection (88%), health & leisure centres (87%) waste & recycling services (83%). **Internet use** - Over 9 in 10 residents (93%) cite they personally use the internet at home. **Community safety** - Nearly all residents (96%) report feeling very or fairly safe in their local area.

Kate Ryan expressed concern at some of the **Residents Survey** findings, two in particular, as follows: **Climate change** - Three quarters (75%) of residents' report feeling very or somewhat worried about the impact of climate change. Most (91%) reported using less energy at home.

Household finances - Nearly two-thirds (62%) of residents report their financial situation in the last 12 months getting a little or a lot worse. Although 59% report their financial position as very or relatively comfortable, 34% report they are just about managing.

The Chairman welcomed Dawn Hamblet, Chief Executive, **Hampshire Association of Local Councils** to the meeting. Dawn provided some background information about HALC and the services they are able to provide to Towns & Parishes in Hampshire, there being 260 such local councils. This includes training for both councillors and employees. Dawn explained how HALC operates, with a Board of Directors, gleaned from 7 District Associations, being set up as a limited company 13 years ago, noting it is "owned" by the local councils that it serves.

Thousands of rural New Forest properties and businesses in Brockenhurst, Burley, Beaulieu, Godshill, Hordle and Sway are to benefit from 'lightning fast' high-speed broadband roll-out thanks to Wessex Internet and Project Gigabit

By [Carolyn Griffith](#) carolyn.griffith@advertiserandtimes.co.uk 13 April 2023

THOUSANDS of rural properties and businesses across the New Forest are to benefit from a government-funded project to roll-out high-speed broadband.

Provider Wessex Internet has won a £14m government-funded three-year contract dubbed Project Gigabit which aims to reach hard-to-reach communities across the UK.

Locally it will be rolled out in Brockenhurst, Burley, Beaulieu, Godshill, Hordle and Sway, transforming broadband speeds and reliability to around 10,500 homes and businesses.

Digital infrastructure minister Julia Lopez said:

"Thanks to this latest multi-million-pound contract for the New Forest, thousands of hard-to-reach homes and businesses in this stunning area will benefit from a state-of-the-art network ready to provide the speed and reliability we will all need in the decades ahead.

"The prime minister has put growing the economy as one of his five top priorities and this investment will go far in delivering on that mission here in the New Forest by equipping rural areas with the infrastructure they need for the digital age."

Wessex Internet says it will work closely with Forestry England and the verderers throughout the programme of work and expects to start network construction in the first communities by the end of this year.

A spokesperson for Forestry England said:

"We very much look forward to supporting Wessex Internet's delivery of ultrafast full fibre broadband on sensitive land managed by Forestry England over the next few years and hope this will have a positive impact on many residents across the New Forest."

The first properties could be connected as early as February 2024.