



Marchwood Parish Council
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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** of the Parish of Marchwood will be held in the Pine Room at Marchwood Village Hall on **Monday 28 April 2025** at 7.00pm.

Tina Dudley, Clerk to the Council

14 April 2025

AGENDA

1. Welcome from the Chairman of the Parish Council.
2. To sign the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 29 April 2024 (Appendix A).
3. To receive the Annual Report from the Chairman of Marchwood Parish Council (Appendix B).
4. To receive reports from District and County Councillors (Appendix C).
5. Community Volunteer Award.
6. Meet our Local Beat Officer.
7. We welcome The Waterside Changemakers to hear an update on their campaign to improve the bus service in Marchwood and the wider Waterside area.
8. To consider any matters raised by the electors of the Parish of Marchwood affecting the parish.

Note: A Parish Meeting consists of the local government electors of the parish. Residents are cordially invited to attend the above meeting.
After the meeting has closed Councillors will be available for informal discussions.

All minutes are draft until ratified by the Committee at the next meeting

Marchwood Parishoners Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Marchwood Village Hall on Monday 29 April 2024 commencing at 7.00pm.

Present: Marchwood Parish Councillors, District Councillor R Young, Hampshire County Councillor David Harrison and 3 members of the public. Cllr John Case – In the Chair

Also in attendance: T Dudley, Parish Clerk, C Cockeram, Deputy Parish Clerk.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 March 2023:

The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 27 March 2023, were approved.

Introduction PC Natham Grimley

PC Grimley introduced himself to the meeting. He explained the local bobby was a new initiative that was in its early days however, it was going well.

Local problems were discussed and Natham provided his contact details should any residents want to contact him.

Annual report Chairman of the Council

The Chairman of the Parish Council presented his report:

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the 2024 Marchwood Annual Parish Meeting.

The year 2023 was challenging for the Parish Council, resulting in the difficult decision of raising the precept much higher than we wanted for 2024-25.

I know we all value our green and open spaces; after all, it is one of Marchwood's finest characteristics, making it a great place to live.

Unfortunately, protecting and enhancing our local environment and promoting participation, good management and efficiency whilst supporting our local community and maintaining the Parish for the benefit of all residents comes with an unavoidable cost. Therefore, providing some background on how the Parish Council makes decisions regarding the precept is required.

We were required to submit our 2024-25 precept (budget) to the New Forest District Council (NFDC) by 31 January 2024. This is a statutory requirement.

The budget planning process begins in October, with all committees reviewing the existing budget and planning expenditures for the forthcoming year. We cannot foresee what will

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happen with inflation or plan for the unexpected. We do plan prudently for what we believe our expenditure will be.

Some parishioners may not be aware that the Council manages approximately 80 acres of open space throughout the village. The Parish Council has over a thousand trees that must be inspected and maintained yearly.

For example, when planning the budget for 2023-24, there was £10,000 in the tree budget; the actual expenditure before year-end is £19,769, with additional work being required. However, the Parish Council delayed the non-urgent work needed to alleviate further budget overspending.

Insurers require that we have an inspection regime for all our trees. We do that on a four-yearly cycle with trees categorised as red (immediate works), amber (scheduled works) and green (needs work but not urgently).

Due to the severe weather resulting in increased work and increasing costs to ensure we comply with our legal liabilities, we set aside £20,000 in the 2024-25 budget for expected expenditure.

We also provide five play parks for various ages and a Skate Park at Cork Field. These facilities are also inspected annually, and our anticipated expenditure is aligned with our forecasts.

Vehicle repairs and maintenance also overran the planned budget, and our insurance did not forecast enough of a rise when preparing the 2023-24 budget. For example, there was unexpected expenditure on repairs and maintenance to the Lloyd Pavilion.

There will always be variations in the budget, but we have measures to ensure we review and evaluate our expenditures regularly. Unfortunately, we have encountered more expenditures than anticipated. Our electricity, gas, and water charges have all exceeded inflation.

The Parish Council recently received correspondence from NFDC stating that the rubbish collection will increase from £600 to £2,450, an unexpected higher increase than we would have forecasted. A similar significant increase in tree work was also notified to us after we had agreed on our 2024-25 budget.

These increases have necessitated engaging with new service providers to ensure we maintain quality service at a more competitive price.

Since the unlawful encampment, the Parish Council has had to strengthen our security measures and apologise for the inconvenience of some of the security measures we had to enforce at short notice.

It was also bitterly disappointing that the Annual Village Fete had to be cancelled due to the unlawful intrusion of the Lloyd Recreation Ground.

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Fortunately, due to the diligent and hard work of Tina Dudley, our Clerk, and her staff, the Parish Council could evict the 'travellers' from the recreation ground. Despite claims that this was a victimless crime, it has cost the Parish Council £3,000.

As sole trustees of the Lloyd Recreation Ground, the Council maintains the Pavilion, sports facilities, and open space.

We recently undertook the scheduled valuation of the Pavilion as part of our risk management and Insurance strategy. Our insurers and risk assessors concluded that the Parish Council is substantially underinsuring the Pavilion.

We have no choice but to correct this situation.

Our current (pre-renewal) sum insured was £650,000, but the recommended reinstatement sum insured has risen to a staggering £1,594,662.

The sum assured includes the actual rebuild cost for insurance purposes, including the architect's fees and site clearance before the rebuild.

The Policy and Resources Committee continues to diligently monitor the Council's finances and procedures to ensure transparency, good housekeeping and best value for using the Council's financial resources.

I assure you that councillors do not take the decision lightly when raising the precept. Careful consideration and analysis of all expenditures are undertaken at every Policy and Resources Committee, with our expenditure and income published on the Council's website before the meeting.

Residents are welcome to attend any of our Council and Committee meetings to discuss items on the agenda and have your say.

We are currently reviewing ways to increase our income and reduce our expenditure. We recently applied for a grant to install solar panels on the Pavilion at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, which will allow us to change the lighting from Halogen to LED to reduce our energy expenditure.

Unfortunately, our bid was unsuccessful, but we will remain actively engaged in finding alternative sources of income to support such innovation. This example is one of many exciting projects that will lead to savings and increase revenue streams.

We are installing drinks and snack facilities at the Lloyd Recreation Ground to provide income and enhance the facilities available to visitors and residents.

The Marchwood Mens Shed has worked with us by building several picnic benches for parishioners to enjoy the recreational facilities at Lloyd Recreation Ground.

The Amenities Committee has worked hard to enhance the village's local nature and conservation areas.

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I wish to thank our committed team of Landscape and Groundworkers who, once again, kept our open spaces clean and well-maintained.

Crooked Hayes Corpses ancient woodland flourished this year with native bluebells and other wildflowers.

In a few weeks, work will begin on a new footpath that will be a real asset to the village. It will run alongside the military fence in Normandy Way from Cracknore Hard Lane to near the entrance to Autumn Road. This path will make walking through the village safer.

Thanks to a grant we have received, work will soon start enhancing several features on the land we own near the village centre. These include the Falklands Memorial, Millennium Memorial and the grassed area on the corner of Main Road and Oakland Drive. In the latter area, we are currently engaged with the owner to transfer ownership.

As some of you might have noticed, we have been busy developing and enhancing our Parish Website, making it more visually appealing and informative and helping parishioners keep up to date on local activities that may affect them in their daily lives.

We are raising awareness through our Community Page on the Parish Website.

I am happy to announce that the Lloyd Recreation Ground will host another Party in the Park again on Saturday, 24 August 2024. The headline act will be Miami Wave, a crowd favourite at our last Party in the Park.

On 8 June, we gathered at our Falklands Memorial to pay our respects to those killed on board the Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram, who were attacked by Argentine fighter jets on 8 June 1982.

As always, we were pleased that Capt Philip Roberts, the captain of Sir Galahad at the time, veterans and their families could attend the ceremony.

Little did we know that just a few days later, we were to learn of the passing of John 'Sid' Kempton, who sadly passed on 29 June 2023. John, or Sid as he was known to his friends, was one of the many people who worked with the Marchwood Parish Council to create a lasting memorial for those who sadly lost their lives and remember all those who served their country in the South Atlantic.

It was Sid that helped to get that immense Falkland Island Rock back to Marchwood. Our honoured guests wanted me to thank our village and the Village's Landscape Team, who tirelessly maintain the memorial to their fallen comrades. I hope they can enjoy our enhancements the next time they visit us on Saturday, 8 June 2024.

This year sees the 80th anniversary of D-Day, and the Parish Council will lay a wreath on Thursday, 6 June, on behalf of us all to give thanks and praise to the many young men and women who gave so much to ensure we have the freedoms we enjoy today.

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We will publish full details of both events on our website, noticeboards and social media. Last autumn, with the assistance of local children, their parents and grandparents saw the planting of 4,000 crocus corms in aid of Hythe & Waterside Rotary's Purple4Polio campaign to end polio now and forever.

The event helped raise several hundred pounds for this worthy cause.

One of the first projects the Marchwood Mens Shed commenced was working with the village school children to build several bird boxes to be located throughout the village. These colourful birdboxes are now home to many birds.

This is another example of how we can get involved in village life.

Although the Village Traders cannot hold their annual Christmas event, I am pleased to inform you that the Parish Council will be organising a Christmas Market & Fayre on Tuesday, 3 December, and preparations are already underway.

The Village Centre Landlord has permitted us to provide an illuminated Christmas Tree and stalls. Our colleagues who manage the Village Hall will also be involved, giving us further opportunities to enhance the event.

We are engaging with various community groups and organisations to ensure it is a wonderful and enjoyable start to the festive season.

This project will be a regular agenda item for the Amenities Committee to ensure oversight and financial control.

We intend for an annual Christmas Market & Fayre to become a regular feature in village life that will be self-sufficient and sustainable for many years.

We will publish full details on our website, noticeboards and social media.

We are raising awareness through our Community Pages, and I am pleased to introduce the Marchwood Hedgehog Watch. Sadly, the UK's favourite spiky little mammal is in severe decline. While it is challenging to monitor hedgehog numbers accurately, it is believed they could be down by over half in rural areas and a third in urban areas since 2000.

You can help hedgehogs by setting up a safe retreat or creating a hedgehog house in your garden and providing some hedgehog-friendly food and water. Ensure your garden is attractive to hedgehogs by leaving compost heaps, overgrown areas, and log piles as they are. Then, wait for these cute critters to visit you!

Better still, why not pop along to their Hedgehog Awareness Day to find out more and see the opening of a Nature Garden showcasing what we can do to help give nature a helping hand?

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The Hedgehog Awareness Day is on Saturday, 11 May, at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, from 10 am to 2 pm.

Another date for your diary is Saturday, 15 June, at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, when the Marchwood Arty-Crafty Group will host "Art in the Park".

It promises to be a fun day, allowing our talented local amateur artists to showcase their work - the Marchwood WI will supply refreshments. It might even inspire you to take up a new hobby.

The Parish Council is delighted with the enthusiasm of community groups working on projects to benefit residents.

We thank the community volunteers for the litter-picking events undertaken this year. The litter-pickers picked up a tremendous amount of litter and disposed of it, making our streets a cleaner, greener place to live and enjoy.

The Planning Committee has and will continue to monitor any comments or concerns raised by our parishioners on planning applications within the Parish. We will listen to the concerns of parishioners so that we may be their voice within the District and County Councils.

The Parish Council would like to thank the Waterside Community Fund (formerly known as the Dibden Allotment Fund) for supporting individuals and organisations in the Parish. Also, we wish to thank and congratulate the Handy Trust for the organisation's work and their staff's dedication to providing youth support throughout the year within the Parish. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and staff for their dedication, professionalism, help, support and hard work throughout these challenging times.

Matters raised by the electors of the Parish -

Residents raised concerns with regard to recent flood issues that had caused distress and damage to homes.

A resident raised issues with residing next to SFC grounds at Staplewood including noise from the gym, irrigation issues leading to ground saturation of his property and noise from ground maintenance plant equipment.

Following a detailed discussion the Chair agreed to make enquiries and raise the issues with relevant parties.

The meeting closed at 8.37pm

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the 2025 Marchwood Annual Parish Meeting.

Spring seems to have arrived in recent weeks, and with it, the many green open spaces around Marchwood are again bursting back into life. The first real splash of colour after a grey winter, daffodils are a sure sign that spring is coming. The mild weather this year has brought them out early.

Recently, we have been awoken to the dawn chorus; our trees are coming into leaf, and the blossom trees add colour around the village.

Whilst nature works its magic, our Landscape & Groundwork Team is also working hard to help things get on their way. They work tirelessly to maintain and, where necessary, improve the amenities available to everyone around the village.

Springtime is my favourite time of the year. Nature's regeneration, new beginnings, and much to look forward to as the clocks go forward and we herald in the lighter evenings.

I know we all value our green and open spaces; after all, it is one of Marchwood's finest attributes, making it a great place to live.

Unfortunately, protecting and enhancing our local environment, promoting good management and efficiency whilst supporting our local community and maintaining the Parish for the benefit of all residents comes with an unavoidable cost.

If you have read my previous Parish Chairman Reports, you will know how many times I have written about the number of trees in our village. They are both a blessing and a curse.

Some parishioners may not be aware that the Council manages approximately 80 acres of open space throughout the village. The Parish Council has over a thousand trees that must be inspected and maintained yearly.

We do that on a yearly cycle with trees categorised as red (immediate works), amber (scheduled works) and green (needs work but not urgently).

Our independent annual inspection regularly identifies more trees needing attention during the coming months.

The last few years have seen an unprecedented draw on the Parish Council's tree budget. Tree maintenance and ensuring a safe environment are legal requirements, so taking no action wasn't a viable option for the problem.

Marchwood has proportionally the same or greater density of trees and green open spaces as our neighbouring parishes. But, unlike them, we have fewer Council Taxpayers, thus making it harder to spread the cost of ensuring a safe environment and meeting the legal requirements.

A change in legislation will require us to provide both waste and recycling bins in 2027, and we await the full extent of the cost implications. Currently, the Council operates

and manages five playparks, approximately 85 acres of open space with over 1,000 trees, hedgerows and fencing, a skatepark, and 25 dog bins.

Five employees are employed to manage all of these assets and the statutory administration of the Council; our Landscape & Groundwork Team consists of 3 full-time employees and two full-time Management and Finance personnel.

As sole trustees of the Lloyds Recreation grounds, the Council also maintains the Pavilion, sports facilities and open space.

The year 2024 was challenging for the Parish Council, resulting in the difficult decision of raising the precept much higher than we wanted for 2025-26.

However, providing some background on how the Parish Council makes decisions regarding the precept is necessary.

We are required to submit our precept (budget) to the New Forest District Council (NFDC) before 1 April 2025 by 31 January 2025. This is a statutory requirement.

The budget planning process begins in September, with all committees reviewing the existing budget and planning expenditures for the forthcoming year. We cannot foresee what will happen with inflation or plan for the unexpected. We do plan prudently for what we believe our expenditure will be.

After careful consideration, the Parish Council decided at its meeting in December that an increase in the precept could not be avoided.

We took the tough decision to raise the precept for 2025-26. A band D property will see an increase in the Council tax of £9.04 per annum or £0.75p monthly.

Oversight of the Council's finances rests with our Policy and Resource Committee, chaired by Councillor Daryll Hindle, which undertakes forensic analysis of the Council's expenditure and plans to ensure financial probity and transparency of our income and spending.

I assure you that councillors do not take the decision lightly when raising the precept.

Our expenditure and income is published on the Council's website before the meetings. Residents are more than welcome to attend any of our Council and Committee meetings to discuss items on the agenda and have your say.

Our staffing is at the lowest level to maintain service delivery, and all other budget expenditures are constantly under review.

One unexpected pressure on our finances was the Autumn Budget announcement to increase Employer National Insurance Contributions to the staff we employ.

Although The Treasury are "conscious that this will impact the finances of town and parish councils", they have confirmed that councils like us will not be included in a package to compensate public sector bodies for this rise.

Fortunately, due to staff retirement this year the effect of this increase will have no significant impact on our salary costs.

I am pleased to announce that Dave Bartlett and Rob Cockrane, key ground staff members, have been promoted and enjoy their new roles. They have already suggested many new ways to be more efficient and help reduce costs. Their energy and enthusiasm are to be admired and celebrated.

We welcome Gal Tsarfaty to the outdoor team. Gal has already settled in very well and is a proactive team member. Gal also lives in the village.

It was my honour to welcome our new vicar, the Rev'd Lauren Cheshire, on behalf of the Marchwood Parish Council and our wider community at her collation at the Church of St John the Apostle, Marchwood, on Wednesday, 9 April.

Lauren comes to Marchwood and Eling Parish with a breadth of ministry experience, having worked as a Youth Leader in Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic Churches.

I now turn to how the Parish Council proactively achieves realistic and sustainable cost reductions.

In recent years, vehicle repairs and maintenance have also overrun the planned budget, and there was an unexpected expenditure on repairs and maintenance to the Lloyd Pavilion.

There will always be variations in the budget, but we have measures to ensure we review and evaluate our expenditures regularly. Unfortunately, we have encountered more expenditures than anticipated. Our insurance, electricity, gas, and water charges have all exceeded inflation.

We are pledged to become more carbon neutral and are actively engaged in switching to electric vehicles and leasing rather than incurring significant capital expenditure each time we buy vehicles.

We have decided to sell our two diesel vehicles and move to greener options. Our two silver trucks have proved uneconomical to run and would cause an unacceptable future burden on the Council's financial resources. They were becoming unreliable and required increasing days in the repair shop.

After consultation with our staff, we will be leasing a fully electric drop-sided Ford E-Transit and a plug-in hybrid Ford Connect van, which are fit for purpose for the workloads we have.

My colleague, Counsellor Nigel Buckett, Chairman of the Amenities Committee, provided compelling evidence in his report to the Council, dated 16 December 2024, on why our approach is financially sound and proportionate.

One of the first priorities where we can utilise the new features will be to undertake a 'spring clean' for all our play parks, making them cleaner and even safer for our younger parishioners.

This combination of these utility vehicles provides us greater flexibility to fulfil our outdoor jobs at an affordable price, which leasing offers, as it makes financial planning and forecasting a lot easier in these uncertain times.

As sole trustees of the Lloyd Recreation Ground, the Council maintains the Pavilion, sports facilities, and open space. We are currently reviewing ways to increase our income and reduce our expenditure.

In the 2024-25 financial year, we applied but sadly failed in our bid for a grant to install solar panels on the Pavilion at the Lloyd Recreation Ground.

However, we believe we will succeed during this year's bidding round thanks to the due diligence of our Parish Clerk, Tina Dudley.

In the coming weeks, we hope to publish detailed plans for significantly reducing our energy costs at the Lloyd Pavillion.

We continue to upgrade the lighting to LED to reduce our energy expenditure further.

Our drinks and snack facilities at the Lloyd Recreation Ground continue to provide income and enhance the facilities available to residents. However, we must continue improving the recreational offerings to reap the full benefit of our investment.

We have already received viable suggestions from the community and intend to consult further in the coming months.

The Marchwood Mens Shed continues to work with the Parish and has worked with us by building some picnic benches for parishioners to enjoy the recreational facilities at Lloyd Recreation Ground.

Hopefully, in a few weeks, work will begin on a new footpath that will be a real asset to the village. It will run alongside the military fence in Normandy Way from Cracknore Hard Lane to near the entrance to Autumn Road. This path will make walking through the village safer.

We are also optimistic about finally being able to announce plans for the long-awaited footpath improvements from Kingfisher Way to Normandy Way. This initiative has suffered from many false starts as the Parish Council continues to unlock funding from the New Forest District Council.

Thanks to a grant we received last year, we enhanced several features on our land near the village centre. These include the Falklands Memorial, Millennium Memorial and the grassed area on the corner of Main Road and Oakland Drive.

Undertaking financial prudence gives us an ideal opportunity to explore more community engagement.

I know from speaking to those who attended that they appreciated and enjoyed our Party in the Park and Christmas Fayre. So, we want to replicate how we can organise and run these events with minimal cost to the council funds to make these an annual event.

Indeed, the surplus from the Christmas Fayre has enabled more festive lights to be purchased to make next year's Christmas Fayre even better.

We have moved the event to Saturday, 13 December 2025, to allow our younger parishioners to attend and enjoy knowing they don't have school to attend the next day.

As some of you might have noticed, we have been busy developing and enhancing our Parish Website, making it more visually appealing and informative and helping parishioners keep up to date on local activities that may affect them in their daily lives.

Unfortunately, we have had to make one difficult decision. So, starting this year, we will reduce the publication of the Marchwood Village News to three editions.

Reducing to three editions was difficult, but our recent distribution audit highlighted that a significant proportion of Marchwood had not received a copy for many years. Therefore, something had to be done to correct the situation, and reducing the number of editions was the most prudent outcome.

We would love to revert to quarterly publication, but we need to explore further opportunities to increase our income streams and continue to make operational savings before considering this.

It is challenging to balance the books and still deliver on our promise to make Marchwood a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

During the coming months, we intend to mark two key historic events.

Marchwood Parish Council will be laying a wreath to commemorate the end of World War II at the War Memorial at St John's Church on Thursday, 8 May 2025, on behalf of our parishioners.

This hugely significant event remains a living memory for many of our parishioners. It is a timely reminder for all generations of the great sacrifice and perils that war presents, especially in these troubled times.

We are delighted to announce the 17th Maritime Regiment and pupils from Marchwood Junior School will also attend

Our new Parish Vicar, Reverend Lauren Cheshire, will officiate.

On 8 June, we will also gather at our Falklands Memorial to pay our respects to those killed on board the Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram, who were attacked by Argentine fighter jets on 8 June 1982.

As always, we were pleased that Capt Philip Roberts, the captain of Sir Galahad at the time, veterans and their families will be attending the commemoration.

Our honoured guests wanted me to thank our village and the Village's Landscape Team, who tirelessly maintain the memorial to their fallen comrades. I hope they enjoy our enhancements the next time they visit us.

In the autumn of 2023, with the assistance of local children, their parents and grandparents saw the planting of 4,000 crocus corms in aid of Hythe & Waterside Rotary's Purple4Polio campaign to end polio now and forever.

It was heartwarming to see that the crocus have survived and flourished, and we are in discussion to repeat the bulb planting this autumn.

We thank the community volunteers for the litter-picking events undertaken this year. The litter-pickers picked up a tremendous amount of litter and disposed of it, making our streets a cleaner, greener place to live and enjoy.

It often goes unsaid, but Marchwood prospers from the many unsung heroes and community champions who go under the radar, undertaking a range of community service in their own time.

They are modest folk who enjoy what they undertake without expectation of reward or recognition.

We must respect that, but it shouldn't stop us from showing gratitude. Therefore, it is appropriate to register our appreciation for what they do tonight and say, "Thank you".

The Parish Council would like to thank the Waterside Community Fund (formerly known as the Dibden Allotment Fund) for supporting individuals and organisations in the Parish.

Also, we wish to thank and congratulate the Handy Trust for the organisation's work and their staff's dedication to providing youth support throughout the year within the Parish.

The Planning Committee has and will continue to monitor any comments or concerns raised by our parishioners on planning applications within the Parish. We will listen to the concerns of parishioners so that we may be their voice within the District and County Councils.

Our Planning Committee Chairman, Councillor Mike Saxby, regularly reminds everyone if you see a green planning application pinned to a lamppost or telephone pole, don't just rely on the Council to make its feelings clear – your comments are equally relevant and welcomed by the planning authority.

Finally, I would like to thank all Parish Committee Chairs and fellow councillors for supporting me and helping make Marchwood a great place to live.

We are unpaid volunteers who have stood for public office, wanting to give back to the community where we have worked or lived for many years.

Being a Councillor is rewarding and fulfilling as it helps ensure our village issues are heard at the county and district level, especially as there will be many challenges ahead.

Having a full complement of councillors ensures the best representation of our collective concerns and issues and guarantees the viability of a sustainable and proactive council.

We encourage and welcome new volunteers to join us in our desire to continue to stand up and represent the Parish of Marchwood.

If you want to join us, don't hesitate to contact the Parish Office for further details.

District Councillor Richard Young - Report for Marchwood Annual Parish Meeting

The big issue that has dominated much of NFDC business since just before Christmas 2024 has undoubtedly been Local Government Reorganisation. This is a direct unavoidable consequence for 15 existing authorities across Hampshire as a result of Hampshire County Councils decision to be a "fast track" authority under devolution. To be absolutely clear, it is not a path that NFDC have chosen or indeed welcomed. At the time of writing this we do not yet know with any degree of certainty the geographic makeup of the proposed new unitary authority covering the New Forest. NFDC has been robustly clear in our position. Some councils seem to favour a move to very large councils, NFDC do not. Some councils want to make a case from breaking up the existing districts like the New Forest, NFDC do not. My NFDC colleagues and I also do not believe that an even bigger council further and further away from local people is the right way forwards. I am pleased that NFDC shares my view in that we will therefore not support any proposal that splits our historic New Forest communities or forces us into an urban lead authority.

In terms of NFDC services, on 14th April 2025 the council commenced deliveries of new wheeled bins and food waste caddies to the "phase 1" areas of the New Forest prior to that new waste collection service starting in June. Marchwood and surrounding communities are in "phase 3" of the new service which is scheduled to commence here in March 2026. In advance of this NFDC recently completed its move from the old and cramped Clay meadow (Hounsdown) depot to a purpose built spacious and modern facility at Hardley Industrial Estate just off of the A326. Further information about the changes to waste collection services were recently circulated to all households across the New Forest with copies of this year's council tax bills which recently came through the mail. Additional targeted mailing, social media posts, and emails will continue to take place to ensure that all residents have multiple opportunities to find out everything about how household waste will be collected in the future.

As someone who was raised on a New Forest council housing estate I have first-hand experience of the incredibly challenging local housing market, whether privately renting, buying, or seeking to access social housing. Over the last year I have worked closely with a significant number of local families to support them with their housing needs. It is so important that where local residential development takes place we strive to ensure that quality affordable homes are delivered which complement our existing community. I was recently successful in arguing for NFDC to refuse planning permission to convert the former Avondale Lodge care home on Hythe Road into a cramped poor quality 12-bedroom House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO). However, I do hope that the applicant comes back with a revised plan that better fits the village, that brings an unused property back into use, and which provides high quality residential accommodation for future members of our community.

As a frequent regular user of public transport, I continue to advocate for better public transport for Marchwood. Being just over a mile (as the crow flies) from Southampton City Centre yet having but one solitary bus per hour serving Marchwood is frankly an appalling level of public transport provision. I am therefore keen to see any investment in public transport on the waterside be prioritised upon increasing the frequency of the

number 8 bus service which is the most accessible, convenient, and affordable option for the majority of waterside residents. There have also been recent further proposals to bring the local rail line back into passenger use through a privately funded "open access application" to the Office for Rail and Road by Alliance Rail. This could potentially offer direct trains to Totton, Southampton, Southampton Airport Parkway, Eastleigh, Basingstoke, Hook, and London Waterloo. A decision on this proposal is expected from the ORR in the Autumn. Whilst on the face of it there are undoubted positives for our community in this proposal, my primary concerns are how far more frequent crossing closures might impact Marchwood and Totton, and given how Marchwood is the current proposed "end point" of this new service how would any associated car parking be managed in the village. It appears rather obvious to me that Marchwood could quickly be swamped by rail commuters leaving their vehicles scattered around nearby residential village roads where there are presently no parking restrictions in place. Both impacting existing residents parking and making the village more hazardous for pedestrians to navigate on foot. These are both significant important issues for our village that must be properly addressed and fully answered well before any rail service commences operation.

Over the last year I have made a number of councillors community grant awards to support both Marchwood Infant and Junior Schools, the Party in The Park music event, and the Marchwood Womens Institute "Singing with Friends" group which provides a welcome opportunity to combat isolation in our community. I look forward to continuing to support our village in everything that I do over the coming year. Thank you all for your ongoing support and collaboration over the previous twelve months, and as always if I can be of any further assistance I can best be reached via email on richard.young@nfdc.gov.uk or via Facebook by searching Councillor Richard Young.

Report for Marchwood Parish Council 28th April 2025
From County Councillor David Harrison

As I am sure you will know, the elections for seats on Hampshire County Council, planned for May 1st have been cancelled. It means I have been asked to continue in the role for an extra year. This is to facilitate plans for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, which will probably result in the abolition of Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council.

I don't know if elections will take place in May 2026, given that the County Council won't likely exist for more than 12 months after that date. I don't favour the abolition of either Authority but this is being driven by government and those in charge at the Council who think that the changes will lead to greater efficiencies and more control "locally" over how funding is allocated.

In the meantime it is pretty much "business as usual", which for some years now has involved myself in trying to achieve savings to address a serious and rising deficit (currently £95 million)... in other words, cutting services and increasing the cost of delivering them to users, where possible.

Some of the most senior officers have left, or announced they are leaving. The remaining ones openly admit that the authority is moving to a situation in which only statutory services will remain.

At present there is a public consultation involving proposed cuts to planned highway maintenance, Older adults day services, Post 16 Transport and School Transport. These conclude on the 7th May. Details on the HCC website.

For now, we still have our local Household Waste Recycling Centre. It has been saved from closure twice following vigorous campaigns but I am not at all sure that it has a long term future given the financial situation.

I have been pressing Officers for an update on the proposed A326 road widening scheme. There is a level of anxiety about what is planned. It is a very long time since the public consultation of early plans, without details. I have suggested that this could incorporate a new bus stop (both sides) but this depends on crossing arrangements for pedestrians (another important element of the scheme).

You may have heard about a proposal from a private company to start running a rail passenger service to Marchwood, linking it to Totton, Southampton Central, Hook and Waterloo. I am meeting with the representatives / owner of Alliance rail to discuss details.

I won't know if I have any grant budget to support community projects until the Autumn.

I have taken on a new role as a volunteer Governor with Hampshire & IOW Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (having been appointed by Hampshire County Council).

Wearing my hat as a Board Member of the New Forest National Park, I have highlighted plans by Forestry England to introduce car parking charges in the car parks they manage. This news has attracted quite a lot of interest. I am trying to encourage them to publish detailed plans for public consultation. There are concerns about verge parking, putting off people from visiting the forest, what happens about people using the car parks for work purposes, what level of charges there might be, whether a discount scheme for local will be offered (to name but a few).

As always, happy to answer any questions :

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