

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 6.30PM IN NEW MILTON TOWN HALL

Councillors:	p J Adams		p P Moores
	p J Baker		R Murrow
	p G Blunden		p A D O'Sullivan
	p S Clarke		p R A Reid - Chairman
	D Rice-Mundy		p D N Tungate
	M Craze – Vice Chairman		p V Schooling
	S Davies		p M Scott-Johns
	p W Davies		p K Trehorn
	p D Hawkins		p R Maynard

In Attendance:

G Flexman - Town Clerk

J Bean – Administrative Officer

The Chairman welcomed County Councillors, Town Councillors, New Milton Police Officers, a member of the public and a representative of the press.

The Chairman advised that as the police had come to the meeting to give an update and as County Councillor Mel Kendal needed to get away as quickly as possible, he would take things in a slightly different order. Cllr Kendal provided his report at the beginning of the meeting (see minute 110). The police provided their update beginning at 6.40pm, as below.

Acting Sgt Leigh Brown is currently covering New Milton and Lymington, stating the crime of shoplifting continues to be a big issue in the town, but that 73.3% of shoplifting cases have resulted in a formal outcome, this is largely thanks to PC Tom Jelly who focuses on shoplifting. Sgt Brown referred to an increase in thefts of and from motor vehicles.

He's keen to engage with local residents at police beat surgeries, but the last meeting at the Arnewood School had not attracted any attendance by residents, apart from the Mayor. Sgt Brown was keen to hear any ideas which might help encourage a dialogue with the residents.

Cllr G Blunden asked about ASB across the town, stating that the public conveniences had recently been targeted with some ASB on the recreation ground over the weekend. Sgt Brown advised that they are arranging extra patrols around the toilets and that he is chasing Brian Byrne at NFDC for additional CCTV which has been promised for some time.

Cllr S Clarke asked about the shoplifting, noting a national press report that 1 in 4 people going through self-checkouts put fewer items through than they take or scan cheaper items in lieu of more expensive ones, he wondered if the stores themselves are doing enough. Sgt Brown said he would still regard this as theft, and that at the Ringwood and Lymington branches of Waitrose they had been employing more security, and this had resulted in less theft.

Cllr K Trehorn asked how the police would engage the public more effectively, and about how long he would be at New Milton. Sgt Brown said that he had been in talks with the school to have the next beat surgery when the school was open for parents' evening in the hope that this would attract a bigger audience. He's not sure how long he would be New Milton based.

Cllr D Hawkins asked about the prospect of the police having a desk on reception in the Town Hall so that residents could come to speak to them in person. Cllr J Baker asked why Lymington has a reception desk and New Milton does not when New Milton has a larger population. Sgt Brown advised that they have been reconfiguring their office here which will allow members of the public to come in and talk to police officers face to face. He had not been a party to discussions about a front desk and would refer this to the Inspector.

Cllr V Schooling asked if there are insufficient police based at New Milton. Sgt Brown said he would always like more, but he did not feel able to answer that question, again he would refer it to the Inspector for his views.

The Chairman thanked the police for their report and willingness to answer questions, and they left at 6.54pm when the meeting was formally opened.

Post Meeting Note: Message from Inspector Darren Ord, New Forest West Neighbourhood
Front Counter – I know you are aware of the issues we have encountered with red tape and costing for us to be able to use the front counter – we are currently looking at a work around with the re-configuring of our own office space so that we have a room members of the public will be able to access from the main council lobby – this will not be staffed every day, but will be a space where we can hold regular beat surgeries and allow us to deal with public enquiries face to face.

Staffing at New Milton – Police Staffing numbers are currently slightly reduced as Sgt Arron Woods is working in Southampton; however, Leigh is covering Lymington and New Milton so supervisory cover is not adversely affected. I am however looking to get a Sergeant in post ASAP to give support to Leigh and the local team. When I look at numbers of crimes per officer, I am happy to say that New Milton is staffed in line with demand and other comparable areas. We also have some excellent PCSO support in Al and Rosie who pick up a great deal of the community engagement work.

105. APOLOGIES

Cllr M Craze, Cllr S Davies, Cllr D Rice Mundy and Cllr B Murrow.

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members have a general dispensation to prepare a budget and set a precept.

107. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that things had been quiet over the last few weeks, but he had attended the following events:

29 January	Cheque Presentation at Kingfisher's
6 February	New Forest Disability Open Day

He took the opportunity to remind Cllrs about the forthcoming Mayor's Tea Party taking place on Saturday 1 March at the Cliff House Hotel from 3pm.

He also reminded the Committee about the NMRA AGM taking place at the Community Centre on Saturday 8 March at 10.15am and hoped Cllrs attend.

108. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6th January 2025. The Town Clerk mentioned an amendment required at the end of Minute 95 which should state that John Adams is a new NFDC member, not just a new NFNPA member.

It was

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Town Council Meeting held on 6th January 2025 having been circulated and amended as above be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes from the meeting were duly signed.

109. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to:

- a) An email from Fran Carpenter advising of a public consultation in relation to Devolution. The on-line consultation is open from Monday 17th February until 11.59pm on 13th April.

The survey is accessible online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hampshire-and-the-solent-devolution/hampshire-and-the-solent-devolution-consultation>

- b) An email from the Estates Manager reporting on recent damage to the Recreation Ground MUGA which had taken place over the weekend.

“The gates at the MUGA entrance were pulled completely off their posts, a planter trough was tipped over on the western boundary of the recreation ground and the tree stakes were damaged to the commemorative tulip tree, fortunately the tree itself was undamaged. All have been logged on 101 and we will be asking NFDC CCTV control if anything was captured on the recreation ground camera. The costs of the damage is around £750.”

110. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

County Councillors

Cllr M Kendal

Cllr Kendal spoke about the financial position at HCC. He advised that Hampshire has the second lowest Council Tax in the Country. Other counties nearby charge around £1700 - £1800 for a Band D property. Hampshire charges £1500. When deciding what to do this year they had looked at a 1% increase which would provide an extra £8m, a 5% increase would yield £40m extra, and 15% some £120m extra.

Every month, 30 extra adults in Hampshire are referred to Adult Social Care and become the clients/patients of HCC. The most basic care package costs £1,000 per month and many far exceed that sum. Additionally, hundreds of parents each month are applying for their children to have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The increase in Council Tax of 4.995% will barely meet the increased demands on funding in these two areas. HCC is using reserves to keep services going, these are likely to be exhausted by 2026/27 and then HCC will be out of funds and the government will have to step in, but he could not say what that would look like.

Cllr M Scott Johns asked if there could be an increase above 5%. Cllr Kendal said no, and that HCC would need an increase somewhere around 15% to make a real difference to the finances. An approach to the government to request leave to go above 5% had been declined. The next round of funding is in the summer and HCC would have to wait to see what that will bring.

Cllr W Davies took the opportunity to thank Cllr Kendal for the resurfacing work done by HCC along Pennington Lane. Cllr Kendal said it was long overdue.

Cllr Kendal left the meeting at 6.40pm.

Cllr F Carpenter

Cllr Carpenter said that she wanted to focus on some good news, and mentioned the following items:

- a) There is a possibility that the Stubbington Study Area may be closing and that the equipment may be sent to Calshot, however there is a campaign in the Stubbington Area to keep it open.
- b) The Highways Team are planning to charge work teams a daily amount to ensure that contractors keep to their timescales and will suffer penalties if they leave sites unmanned and without work taking place.
- c) An excellent stop smoking campaign – Smoke-free Hampshire which is doing very good work now.
- d) Various activities at the country parks for families during the half term period.

Cllr G Blunden asked what the Highways Team charges to contractors would be hoping that they would be set at a meaningful amount. Cllr Carpenter said she did not have the figures. She would find out for him.

District Councillors**Cllr G Blunden**

Cllr Blunden reported that he had attended cabinet and other meetings. Nasty storms had done further damage at Hordle cliffs and Milford, including to beach huts and to the sea wall. There had been loss of shingle at Hurst Spit.

He was concerned about the current state of Public Conveniences in New Milton and in other areas, these are an important asset to the residents and to visitors. He reported that NFDC are looking at investing in them to bring them up to standard.

Finally, he spoke about the changes in rubbish collection which will be implemented in phases, with New Milton being part of the first phase. In the next couple of weeks letters will be going out to NM residents and there is also information online which will help prepare people for the upcoming changes and launch of wheelie bins.

A film which had been prepared by NFDC titled waste prelaunch video was shown to the committee, highlighting the roll out of bins of various sizes.

Cllr S Clarke

Cllr Clarke advised that he had been chairing the NFDC Local Plan Task & Finish Group and that the Issues & Scope document is now subject to Public Consultation which opened on 17th February and closes on 4th April further information can be found here: <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/localplan>

There are 50 questions in the questionnaire, and it would be helpful to have as many responses as possible. He said that residents do not need to answer all questions and can just focus on areas and issues that particularly interest them or that they want to be addressed. There will be a drop in face-to-face event in New Milton at the Memorial Hall on 3rd March.

At the same time, the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan is going out to informal public engagement with drop-in sessions at the Town Hall on 14 and 15 March which will be attended by the TDM and a rota of councillors who will be available to answer questions from members of the public.

He went on to say that building development at Brockhills is due to start at the beginning of April, with 166 dwellings to be built there. The lorries will enter the site via Sway Road opposite the farm shop. The project is due to run until 2028. All parking will be on site, and the developers have been taking photographs of Sway Road, in order to show the state of it lest they should be blamed for pre-existing damage when they come to make good at the end of the project.

Cllr A O' Sullivan

Cllr O' Sullivan advised that he has been attending his usual committees, but of note was the CIL Committee at which committee members made recommendations for the distribution of £1million to a large number of organisations which had submitted bids. The committee's recommendations are now being referred to the cabinet for approval.

Cllr J Adams

Cllr Adams reported that he had attended his usual meetings at NFDC.

He also took the opportunity to give feedback from his dealing with the NPA who are concerned about the fact that there are now fewer commoners and that many farms previously held by commoners are now owned by people as second or holiday homes. There are challenges to keeping the forest as a forest given the new demands to look for sites to build new homes on. There had been a mention of charging for the car parks which is under serious consideration.

Cllr D N Tungate

Cllr Tungate advised that he has been attending his usual meetings at the District Council, but he had nothing of special relevance to New Milton to report.

111. REFERRED ITEM

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being an item referred from the F&GP Committee relating to a previous recommendation made by the Amenities Committee that was declined at the last F&GP Committee on 3rd February. Members had considered correspondence received from a local resident asking for the colour to be changed.

Cllr G Blunden explained that it relates to a new car park barrier at Barton Common Road which is currently painted yellow as most are for reasons of safety.

The Amenities Committee had recommended that it should be painted green. Cllr Blunden said that the officer recommendation to that committee had been to keep it yellow, and that he felt this should be followed.

After some discussion and a vote

It was

RESOLVED:

That the new car park barrier along Barton Common Road should remain yellow.

112. COMMITTEE REPORTS**a) Planning Committee**

Cllr S Clarke, Chairman of the Planning Committee, submitted the minutes of the Committee meetings held on 15 and 30 January and 11 February 2025 and moved their adoption.

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 168 to 197 inclusive of the meetings held on 15 and 30 January and 11 February be received.

b) Amenities Committee

Cllr G Blunden, Chairman of the Amenities Committee submitted Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 January 2025 and moved their adoption.

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 79 to 91 inclusive of the meeting held on 20 January be received.

c) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr D N Tungate, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee submitted Minutes of Committee meeting held on 3 February 2025 and moved their adoption.

RESOLVED:

That minutes 86 to 101 inclusive of the meeting held on 3 February be received.

113. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Payments, covering November and December and previously endorsed by F&GP, was submitted for Council approval.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED:

That the Schedule of Payments Nos 07/24/25 in the sum of £311,917.18 for the period 1 November – 31 December be approved.

The Schedule of Payments was duly signed by the Chair and Town Clerk. The Town Clerk advised that £60k should be coming back from NFDC in relation to the works at Ballard Lake from S.106 monies.

114. COUNCIL BUDGET/PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/2026

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2 being the Precept Request for New Milton Town Council as previously circulated. Ahead of devolution and local government reorganisation, and taking account of everything, including inflation, the recent changes in the NI rates and the level at which they now kick in, the increase of 19.6p per week on a Band D property appeared entirely reasonable and affordable.

Following a unanimous vote.

It was

RESOLVED:

That next year's Budget of £1,450,227 as endorsed by F&GP on 10 December 2024 and the revised Precept for 2025-26 of £1,450,227 be approved.

The Precept Request was duly signed.

115. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS SERVING ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr A O' Sullivan provided an update on the Forest Arts Centre for the period from September to December last year. The centre had been very busy they had hosted 21 classes and 51 workshops with around 200 attendees for the classes and 392 for the workshops. They had also put on 32 shows many of which had been very well attended. The centre will be involved in the New Forest Play on Words again this year.

116. TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The Chairman referred to Appendix 3 being the TDM report which had previously been circulated. The report was noted, including future Police Beat surgeries.

117. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Chairman referred to Appendix 4 being the Communications Report, he noted that the new website will be up and running before the beginning of the next Town Council year, that is by 1st April.

Cllr G Blunden said that he was pleased to see this inaugural report from the Communications Officer and found the content useful.

118. NEXT MEETING: Monday 31 March 2025 at 6.30pm – Town Hall, New Milton.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7.33pm for the Democratic Half Hour.

DEMOCRATIC HALF HOUR

The Chairman asked if anyone wished to speak, and they did not.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the public session of the meeting at 7.35 pm. With the agreement of members present, the Chairman introduced a Private Session item.

PRIVATE SESSION**PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

The Chairman moved that public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business pursuant to section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

119. LEASEHOLD AND FREEHOLD ASSETS

The Town Clerk had provided Cllr G Blunden, Chair of the Amenities Committee and Cllr S Davies fellow NFDC Portfolio Holder, with a list of the freehold and leasehold land and properties owned and maintained by New Milton Town Council.

Cllr Blunden explained that with the uncertainty of devolution it may be a good idea for the Town Council to request that land currently held on a lease by the Town Council from District Council be transferred into Town Council ownership, like those that were originally transferred in 1980 following a previous Local Government Reorganisation.

Following some discussion and a vote

It was

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk write to NFDC requesting leasehold assets be transferred into NMTC ownership.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 7.54pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____

Distribution:

Town Councillors

District Councillors J L Cleary, C Ward

County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, K Mans

New Milton Police

Press

Alan Watson – NewMilton.net

Sue Larking - NMRA

Mark Jeffries – Estates & Facilities Manager

Editor - Focus