

**Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee of New Milton Town Council held on Monday 27 November 2023 at 6.30pm at the Town Hall, Ashley Road, New Milton, BH25 6AS.**

|              |   |              |   |                      |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|----------------------|
| Chairman:    | p | G R Blunden  | p | M Craze (Vice Chair) |
| Councillors: | p | D Hawkins    |   | B Murrow             |
|              |   | J Baker      | p | A O' Sullivan        |
|              |   | D Rice-Mundy | p | V Schooling          |

In attendance:

Officers: G Flexman - Town Clerk  
M Jeffries – Estates & Facilities Manager  
J Bean – Committee and Civic Administrator

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, Officers, three members of the public, and a representative of the press. He took the opportunity to pay tribute to Richard Prime, former Chairman of The Friends of Ballard Water Meadow for many years who died recently.

“I had the privilege of working with Richard together with my colleagues on the introduction of higher-level stewardship (HLS) and the cattle grazing of Dexters on the Meadow.

Richard was a lovely guy, and a gentleman always with a twinkle in his eye and dry sense of humour. He always listened and respected other people’s views with a pragmatic and practical approach to conservation and caring for the environment.”

Members agreed that it would be appropriate for the Town Clerk to write to Mrs Prime offering condolences for her loss.

**Public Participation**

Simon Quincey of Transition Lymington came to speak about the Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP). He referred to the Coast to Forest Linkup Tube Map that he had produced, which had been previously circulated as Appendix 2. He gave a little background that there would be money available via HCC to improve conditions for cyclists, in particular commuter cyclists and to encourage greater use of bicycles rather than cars.

He recognised that the county is very large, and his focus was on a small area which could make a big difference to local cyclists, covering the Hordle, Milford, Sway and New Milton areas, covering a population of 65,000. He stated that his focus was on three points:

1. That the LCWIP should focus on the Coast to Forest Linkup.
2. That the LCWIP should refer to the specific Tube Map Routes.
3. That these routes should be prioritised as offering a lower outlay for maximum improvements.

Cllr D Hawkins was concerned that the Tube Map routes, especially the route between New Milton and Milford relied on very busy roads, including the B3058 which has speed limits varying between 30 and 50, with winding roads and blind corners. It also has many potholes; his view was that cycling on that road is entirely unsafe at the moment.

Simon Quincey said that he agreed with this, but the LCWIP was an opportunity to seek funding to improve roads; he would not recommend that anybody should cycle that route as it is now.

Cllr A O' Sullivan asked how Lymington Transition had surveyed cyclists for their views. Simon advised they had meetings with Cycling Clubs, and also had stalls at various events including the Bee Fayre in New Milton and the Summer Spectacular in Lymington.

Cllr V Schooling echoed Cllr Hawkins' concerns about the B3058 route. And the number of cyclists already using it and the effect this had on motor vehicles.

Richard Jenner, a local resident, keen cyclist, and motorcyclist spoke about his concerns with the busy roads and the state of them, his hope was that if the LCWIP - and in particular the Coast to Forest Link up - was adopted this would lead to improvements in road conditions for all road users.

He did not agree with the focus on Commuting Cyclists.

The meeting was formally opened at 6.50pm.

## 72. APOLOGIES

Cllrs J Baker, B Murrow, D Rice-Mundy

## 73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members have a dispensation to discuss the budget and set a precept.

## 74. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman brought forward Item 11 - NF LCWIP as it had been mentioned in Public Participation. He invited comments from Councillors.

There were concerns expressed about the cost of the road improvements needed. Questions about how much money would be available, concerns that these routes should link up with the routes in the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan.

The Chairman came out of session to allow David Orme, a Member of NM Green Routes Working Group (cycling aspects) and Member of NF CWG to answer these points. David advised that there is no specific detail he could offer at the moment.

He said that the LCWIP will set the strategy for the next 10 years. He advised that this is not all about money, although there will obviously be costs involved, he said it is about hearts and minds, and asking people to support the concept.

The Chairman said while the Town Council could support the concept, without any idea of what funding there would be, it's difficult to see how far the concept can go.

Cllr Hawkins agreed that the idea is fantastic, but he could not support the concept without more detail.

Cllr Schooling agreed the idea is fantastic, but it could cost millions to implement.

Cllr Blunden proposed that the Council should support the concept of NF LCWIP.

It was

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That NMTC supports New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP) concept recognising much work will be required to determine the actual safest cycling routes.***

75. **MINUTES**

The Chairman referred to the previous Committee minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

It was

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023, previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.***

The minutes were duly signed.

76. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Town Clerk confirmed all action points listed had been addressed or are on the agenda for further discussion at this meeting.

| Minute | Action Points | Action by date | To be actioned by |
|--------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
|--------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|



|      |                                 |          |                 |
|------|---------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| 57   | Annual Budgets / Fees & Charges | 27/10/23 | Execs           |
| 60a) | Meeting with Police             | 27/10/23 | Execs           |
| 60b) | Contact NFDC re: Rec toilets    | ASAP     | Estates Manager |
| 60c) | Benches on the Rec              | ASAP     | Estates Manager |
| 60d) | CCTV additional units           | ASAP     | Town Clerk      |
| 60f) | Implement HCC template letters  | ASAP     | Town Clerk      |
| 61   | Land Use Requests               | ASAP     | Comms Officer   |
| 65   | Ashley Parade improvements      | 30.10.23 | F&GP            |
| 67   | Forest Arts Centre future       | 30.10.23 | TDM             |

a) **Minute 60 a)**

The Town Clerk advised that police seem to be getting more of a handle on ASB issues in the town and are currently focussing on shoplifting, and thefts from non-dwelling buildings, eg sheds.

b) **Minute 67**

The Town Clerk advised that funding for the New Forest Arts Centre is not under immediate threat and will continue until 2025. Cllr A O' Sullivan confirmed this. Cllr V Schooling was pleased to hear that there would be more time to lobby for further funding so that the centre is not lost.

77. CORRESPONDENCE

a) An email from Cllr Nick Adams-King, Lead Cabinet Member for Universal Services at Hampshire Highways:

"I promised to keep you up to date with highway issues and information which may be of help. In my conversations with many of you I've identified that utility companies undertaking work on the highway is often a significant frustration. The notice they give, the disruption they cause and the seeming inability to influence the length, scope and extent of works are, I know, of great concern to many. Therefore, I asked the HCC Highways Street Works team to provide a briefing to explain how utility works are planned, what influence we have over them and what to do if they are causing significant disruption in your parish. This is in the form of an FAQ section copied below".

The Town Clerk advised the main issue concerning Town Council is that a utility company cannot be stopped from working on the public highway except under very exceptional circumstances.

- b) An email from the Communications & Community Engagement Officer relating to the Hedgehog Highway Project seeking Town Council participation in the scheme which looks to address the diminishing number of hedgehogs in the country and to encourage the purchase of hedgehog highway surrounds which will give hedgehogs safe entry to and from domestic gardens.

The Chairman advised that he has three regular hedgehog visitors to his garden, and it was agreed that this is a great initiative that the Town Council can support.

- c) A further email from the Communications & Community Engagement Officer relating to the Litter Pickers of the New Forest who carried out a very successful Litter Pick in New Milton recently.

The Chairman took the opportunity to congratulate the Litter Pickers on a job very well done, but also expressed his regret that this level of involvement from volunteers was so necessary, he hoped that more could be done with educating members of the public.

- d) An email from Natalie Thomas of Public Health of IOW Council based in Newport. "My name is Natalie Thomas, and I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Public Health Apprentice currently leading on a project with Hampshire County Council to implement and deliver 5 or more sensory walks across the county as part of the Hampshire Improving Mental Wellbeing Strategy priority actions."

The project idea is to create a sensory walk in the New Forest, either in New Milton or Totton. The Chairman felt this proposal should be explored. It could fit in well with other improvements already proposed at Ballard as part of a bid for CIL funds.

- e) An email from Bob Lord, Chairman of FBWM seeking permission for a bench at Ballard Water Meadow. And raising a question about memorial plaques on trees.

The Town Clerk advised that there is already a policy relating to benches. The usual process is for the family seeking the bench to approach the Town Council and this would be relayed to Bob Lord.

Regarding trees, the Town Council operates a Plant a Tree initiative and again there is a policy in place covering that.

## 78. LAND USE REQUESTS

- a) A request from Ballard School to hold cross country runs on 5<sup>th</sup> December for years 3&4 between 13:40 and 14:30 and on 6<sup>th</sup> December for years 5-8 between 13:40 and 15:30 including a passage through the Ballard Water Meadow if safe to do so with conditions underfoot.

**RESOLVED: Agreed, subject to our usual terms and conditions of use.**

## 79. FEES & CHARGES 2024/25

The Town Clerk referred to Annex A - Schedule of Fees & Charges 2024/25, v.2 which had previously been circulated and advised that the second version had been prepared with a 6% inflation rather than a 5% increase in Version 1 that was considered insufficient as inflation has proved to be volatile over the past 12 months.

Members went through the Fees & Charges page by page, the Town Clerk highlighting changes, such as the Indoor Bowling Club who had been paying considerably more than double the Outdoor Bowling Club, making a case for a rent reduction on the basis that the club has been running at a loss and lost many members during Covid.

The Indoor Bowling Club had presented evidence in the form of their accounts, and a letter setting out their history. It had been decided to reduce the rent in the hope that this could help the Club to survive, the reduction was around 40%.

Cllr Hawkins interjected that this reduction must be a better alternative to an empty Council building. Instead of paying £10k plus, their rent will be £6k.

The fees at Fawcetts Field have risen by 6%. The ground rent for the Football Club was reviewed last November and that is fixed until 2026 at £4,200 pa. Wessex Pitch recharges amount to £13.5k per annum.

The fees at Ashley Rugby Club have increased by 6%. The pavilion rent was reviewed last November and is fixed until 2026 at £3,445 pa plus £460 storage.

The fees at Fernhill have gone up by 6% also. The pavilion rent is currently being negotiated at £5k, the Cricket Club are looking for a 25-year lease from 1 April 2024.

The Chairman asked how this would work and whether this would be a good idea. The Town Clerk advised that any long lease would not encompass the whole of the building and we would ensure that some of it would be kept back for public and / or alternative use in the future. They only pay for their “demised premises”.



The Town Clerk said the charge for the Girl Guides hut would remain at £1, while the rent for the Scout Hut would increase to £92 pa. He explained that the reason for the disparity is that the Girl Guides had provided their own hut whereas the Scouts rent their building from NMTC. The Friendly Dog Club Rent remains at £2,250 pa having been reviewed in February 2023, a further review will take place in 2026.

So far as Allotments are concerned, they had not been reviewed this year and the rents remain at the same level as last year. The Chairman asked the Estates Manager what the waiting list is looking like now. Mark Jeffries confirmed that it has been much reduced, around 5-6 plots had been let in the last week or so. There are a further 8 plots to be let at Lymington Road, and he hoped that the waiting list which is currently below 30 will reduce further before the end of the year.

Finally, the Town Clerk turned to rents at the Moore Close Site. Following discussions at the last Executive Committee, it had been decided that the £100 charge for Local Organisations and Charitable Car Boot Sales be retained at this level, as it is what staffing each event costs NMTC. Town Council insurance is conditional upon a supervisor being present at car boot sales.

It was then,

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the Fees & Charges (Version 2) for 2024/25 be endorsed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2023.***

80. **AMENITIES COMMITTEE BUDGET 2024/25**

The Town Clerk referred to Annex B Amenities Committee Budget, Version 3 which had previously been circulated, noting the largest expenditure is staff salaries that had increased by £1,950 per head that equates to £1 per hour for full time employees.

Where it is possible and necessary the service makes use of contractors who do not attract the ongoing costs that are part of direct employment costs.

The figure for tree work has been substantially increased in the hope that this will cover the “once in a lifetime” storms that are now occurring on a more regular basis. Next year’s Tree Work budget was increased from £28k to £40k. There is also separate provision for Ash tree die back of £15k.

The Town Clerk advised that the Executive Committee had been through the Amenities budget line by line twice already, and members were happy with it.

It was then

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That the Amenities Budget for 2024/25 in the sum of £720k be endorsed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2023.***



**81. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND / CIL**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 - Proposed Regeneration Scheme for Ashley Parade. This had been endorsed by the F&GP Committee at their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October and is due to come before the Town Council meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 for final approval, pending further discussions with NFDC this week.

There was some discussion about the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, also known as the Levelling Up Fund. NFDC had received a total of £1m and New Milton TC would be allocated £15K from the fund. Cllr Schooling expressed the view that New Milton should have received more, and asked if a further bid could be made for more money.

The Chairman advised that there had not been a bidding process, the decision was made by NFDC on the sums allocated across the district. Totton had received the lion's share while Lymington had received nothing. There was no route to further allocation from this pot. The Town Clerk undertook to provide Cllr Schooling with more details.

The Town Clerk advised a bid is being made for CIL money which NFDC has made available, and this will be a request for £75k towards improvements at Ballard Lake.

**82. NF LCWIP**

This item was brought forward and covered under Item 3 - Public Participation.

**83. CCTV**

The Chairman referred to the report prepared by PS Arron Wood regarding proposed locations for additional CCTV cameras in the town. The report had previously been circulated as Appendix 3.

The Chairman advised that there are currently 7 CCTV cameras around the town:

1. New Milton Recreation Ground mid-way at north end, adjacent to Skate Park
2. Junction of Station Road and Ashley Road north-west corner opposite Nobels
3. Junction of Station Road with Whitefield Road and Osborne Road, SE corner
4. Ashley Crossroads, junction Ashley Road/Ashley Common Road, NW corner
5. Junction of Elm Avenue and Station Road, south-west corner near Bradbeers
6. Junction of Gore Road & Old Milton Road, north-west junction by Fire Station
7. Old Milton Green, Junction of Old Milton Road, Lymington Road & Xch Road



The proposals are for five new cameras to be situated at:

1. Ashley Recreation Ground in the corner of the car park
2. Station Road opposite Morrisons
3. The area of the MUGA on the Rec
4. Fawcetts Field by our site depot
5. The entrance to the Arnewood School and Cemetery

Cllr Hawkins stated that previously Ashley Recreation Ground was due to have 2 cameras and he was concerned one would not be sufficient. The Estates Manager confirmed one modern camera with high level coverage would be sufficient.

It was then

***RECOMMENDED: That CCTV proposals be endorsed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee for Town Council approval.***

#### 84. AUDIT REPORT

The Town Clerk advised that the remit of Auditors has been extended in recent times, they no longer consider only the accounts, but they are also dutybound to consider governance and risk management covering all potential risks including reputational, financial and legal ensuring best practice is maintained.

Following the issues with the Risk Assessment at a recent charity event on Council Land, the Internal Auditor had made the following recommendations:

***“I strongly suggest the Council appoints a professional Risk Management consultancy to assist in developing its current Risk Strategy and special events Risk Assessments to avoid any recurrence of the matter that arose recently.”***

**R1.** Members should instruct the Clerk/RFO and the Estates & Facilities Manager to seek quotations for/go out to tender for a professional Risk Management Consultancy to assist it in developing its existing Risk Strategy, Risk Registers and associated documentation.

**R2.** Henceforth, the Clerk/RFO, Estates & Facilities Manager must create and issue a Risk Assessment proforma to any organisation wishing to hold an event on Council property. This Risk Assessment must be fully completed, submitted with all required supporting documentation (such as insurance documentation, confirmation of attendance by St John’s Ambulance, other professionally trained staff for example) prior to Council approval for an event is awarded.

She praised the current system of Risk Assessments and referred to them as “exemplary”. Professional Risk Management will add a further dimension and join up all the Risks into a strategy for the Council as a whole.

There was some discussion about the recent issue and concerns were expressed that NFDC had given permission for an event on Town Council land without Town Council involvement.

The Chairman assured the Committee that in future all events on Town Council land would be subject to Town Council approval and this would be irrespective of the involvement of any other organisations and their views, including SAG.

The Estates Manager confirmed that he had found a suitable independent company who may be able to help. It was agreed we should contact the firm with a view to exploring this further and obtaining suitable quotes.

It was then,

**RECOMMENDED:**

***That proposals /quotes be sought for independent advice on risk assessments.***

85. **CHAIRMAN'S ITEMS**

The Chairman spoke about National Tree Week which is the UK's largest tree celebration. Each year the country's conservation sector, volunteer groups and tree lovers come together to plant thousands of trees to mark the start of the tree planting season. This year's National Tree Week is extra special as it marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous ***Plant a Tree in '73 campaign*** – from which the National Tree Week and Tree Council was born.

The Town Council Plant a Tree initiative enables residents and visitors to participate in tree planting, a popular scheme encouraging community participation and contributions enhancing the town's green canopy while remembering loved ones, a special anniversary or just for the love of trees. On Wednesday this week we will be launching ***Plant a Tree in '23*** with local residents planting trees in the open space adjacent to the play area in Doe Copse Way. We also look forward to planting our first community orchard of heritage fruit trees at Fawcetts Field in December.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Town Council staff stating that the town is looking really good. The Christmas lights are beautiful. The Chairman then wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

86. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024** at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Ashley Road, New Milton.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS**

| <b>Minute</b> | <b>Action Points</b>        | <b>Action by date</b> | <b>To be actioned by</b> |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 74            | Support NF LCWIP concept    | 12.12.23              | F&GP                     |
| 77 b)         | Hedgehog Highway Project    | 02.01.24              | Town Council             |
| 77 d)         | A Sensory Walk Project      | 02.01.24              | Town Council             |
| 78            | Ballard X-country request   | ASAP                  | Town Clerk               |
| 79            | Fees & Charges 2024-2025    | 12.12.23              | F&GP                     |
| 80            | Amenities Budget 2024/25    | 12.12.23              | F&GP                     |
| 83            | CCTV Additional cameras     | 12.12.23              | F&GP                     |
| 84            | Seek Risk consultant quotes | ASAP                  | Estates Manager          |
| 85            | Promote Plant a Tree in '23 | ASAP                  | Comms Officer            |

Distribution:

Town Councillors

Estates & Facilities Manager

District Councillor J L Cleary

County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, and K Mans

New Milton Police

Press

Sue Larking – NMRA