

Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee of New Milton Town Council held on Monday 4 September 2023 at 6.30pm at the Town Hall, Ashley Road, New Milton, BH25 6AS.

Chairman: p G R Blunden

Vice-Chairman: p M Craze

Councillors: C Baker B Murrow
p J Baker p A O' Sullivan
p D Rice-Mundy p V Schooling
p D Hawkins

In attendance:

Councillors: S Clarke, A Reid

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

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, 5 members of the public, Jill Colclough from NFDC and a representative of the press.

Public Participation

Julia Stamper who is chair of the Trustees of the New Milton Community Garden was keen to clarify:

1. If the new line of shrubs and native plants will be planted before work begins on the new Housing Development which is due to commence at the end of this month.
2. Whether work on the Housing Development at Moore Close would be completed by September next year.
3. Whether the new path to the garden would be fully accessible to people with mobility issues, as there are several volunteers who would have difficulty negotiating the current field layout. Also, if this would be done in the Autumn.
4. If the orchard is on target to be planted in the Autumn.
5. Whether it would be possible to put some security around the standpipe to prevent people from turning it on and leaving it on or taking water.

Mandy Hayes came to report on the drive to eliminate dog fouling at Barton Common. She is leading this drive. She stated that on their first outing the PUPS had collected 1,116 bags, but last weekend they had collected only 46. She said that the message seems to be getting through and that people have been putting their own bags in the poo bag dispensers. Awareness has really been raised.

Bob Lord Chairman Ballard Meadow Friends Group gave a short presentation on proposals to apply for Ballard Water Meadow and Barton Common to become Local Nature Reserves.

The Chairman formally opened the meeting and advised members that Cllr Charles Baker is very unwell. He extended his sympathies to Cllr Judith Baker on behalf of the council.

39. APOLOGIES

Cllrs C Baker and B Murrow.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

41. LOCAL NATURE RESERVES

The Chairman brought forward item 12 from the agenda, following Bob Lord's presentation.

The Chairman set the scene, defining the designations given to parcels of land in New Milton.

Barton Common is a SINC and a Common and is subject to an HLS agreement and a management plan. Advice is sometimes sought from NFDC and the New Forest Land Advice Service regarding its long-term management.

Adjacent to the Common is Barton Cliffs which are designated SSSI, and Long Meadow that has Village Green status since last year.

Ballard Water Meadow is also a SINC, is subject to an HLS agreement, a local management plan and advice also comes from New Forest Land Advice Service.

Cllr D Hawkins asked what difference Local Nature Reserve status would make to the areas, is there a financial benefit to it or would it cost the Town Council money?

The Town Clerk advised that he had sought the advice of our solicitor who had some concerns about potential conflicts between NMTC as owner of the land and a newly acquired status of the land. However, our solicitor added that any conflict would probably be minor as the parcels of land are in reality a responsibility rather than an asset in the ordinary sense of the word.

The Chairman asked for Jill Colclough's view on whether the change of status to Local Nature Reserve would be worthwhile. She said she was ambivalent, but she could not think of any disadvantages other than the possibility raised by Anthony Harris in relation to conflicts about potential land usage in the future.

The advantages are about the social context, members of the public do not understand what a SINC is, but a Local Nature Reserve is easily understood as it is part of common parlance. She was not sure if the new designation would entail dogs having to be kept on leads when they visit.

(Cllr J Baker left the meeting at 7.10pm)



Cllr S Clarke spoke in support of the idea, suggesting solicitors are always overly cautious for various reasons. He felt that the major benefit is in the perception of what that land is. There would possibly be very little difference in the way that the land would be managed, but it would have a better known and more easily understandable designation. He also felt that people took notice of the information boards at both sites and were engaging with that.

The Chairman wondered if the Town Council had failed in its messaging, referring to both Ballard Water Meadow and Barton Common as SINC's rather than Local Wildlife Sites that is their alternative name commonly used elsewhere in the country.

Cllr V Schooling was against the idea but advised she could be persuaded if it could be shown that gaining Local Nature Reserve status would improve the local economy and bring more tourists and visitors to the town.

The Chairman invited a proposal from members of the Committee.

Cllr D Hawkins proposed that the local wildlife sites at Barton Common and Ballard Water Meadow keep their current designations as SINC's and no action be taken to designate them as Local Nature Reserves. Cllr A D O' Sullivan seconded the motion.

A vote then took place and

It was,

RESOLVED:

That Local Wildlife Sites at Barton Common and Ballard Water Meadow keep their current designations as SINC's and no action be taken to designate them as Local Nature Reserves.

42. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman addressed Julia Stamper's questions:

So far as the building of the development is concerned, NMTC has no role in it and will try to find out for her from NFDC.

The questions about the path and orchard are operational, but it is expected that they will go ahead as planned in the Autumn, this is a matter for the Estates Manager.

As to the question about the standpipe, this too is operational and is for the Estates Manager to consider.

The Chairman took the opportunity to express his gratitude to Mandy Hayes for all the work the PUPs have done at Barton Common.

43. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to the previous Committee minutes of 11th July 2023. An error had been noted, Sarah Conacher had been referred to as Sue Conacher, and this was corrected.

It was then

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 11 July 2023, previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

The minutes were duly signed.

44. MATTERS ARISING

The Town Clerk confirmed all action points listed had been addressed.

Minute	Action Points	Action by date	To be actioned by
29	Working Parties	04.09.23	All Cllrs
30	Project Groups	04.09.23	All Cllrs
31b	Contact HCC - New footbridge	04.09.23	Town Clerk
31c	CANGO Bus Service	04.09.23	Town Clerk
32	Land Use Requests	ASAP	Administrator
33	Ballard Meadow grazing	04.09.23	Amenities
34	Carrick Way/Ashington Park	04.09.23	Estates Manager
35	Hollands Wood Drive	04.09.23	Play Area WP
36	Allotments Waiting List	04.09.23	Administrator
37b	Travellers Eviction	ASAP	Town Clerk
37c	ASB and PCC / Police visit	ASAP	Town Clerk

a) **Minute 31b**

The Town Clerk referred to Minute 31b relating to the footbridge and an email received from Brian Hill - Chief Engineer - Structures at Hampshire County Council. The end of the email states:

“I do completely understand the frustrations of the Town Council with respect to the footbridge replacement and I am sorry that it is taking so long to implement the design you were shown some time ago.”

b) Minute 31c

The Town Clerk referred to an email he had received from the Cango Co-ordinator Joan Salvage on Friday 1st September when Cango officially came to an end.

“It is with a sad heart that I am writing to you on my last day as the Cango Co-ordinator. I can still remember at the beginning of me taking on the Booking Service, when I came to your office with John Warden. I never imagined then that I would be doing it for all these years (from 1 October 2015). I have really enjoyed every minute, and I’m really upset that it has now come to an end. I sincerely hope that many of the local people will still be able to access the bus. Thank you for all your help and support over the years.”

The Town Clerk also referred to his reply, as follows:

“I’m very sorry your much valued involvement has finally come to an end in such circumstances. I do recall Cllr Ken Thornber querying whether the booking service could be run from the IOW. But you were a trailblazer, noting it seems half the country’s workforce now works from home! It has been a pleasure working with you, and John behind the scenes. With Best Wishes for the future”.

- c) Cllr V Schooling raised the issue of the two BT phone boxes on the High Street which are in a “disgusting” state. She stated that she would be waging war on BT Openreach as they are dirty and poorly maintained.

The Estates Manager advised that he had been trying to report the matter to them that their phone boxes are in a parlous state. He agreed to take photographs and send those to them in order to progress the matter further.

45. CORRESPONDENCE

- a) A thank you card from a “newish” resident:

“To the people responsible and the gardeners, for the lovely display of flowers and plants around the town this summer. Many thanks for making New Milton such a lovely town. Much appreciated.”

- b) A thank you card from Circus Ginett following their recent visit to the town, as follows:

“Thank you for having us once again. Hope you are happy with our visit. We look forward to coming back next year.”

46. LAND USE REQUESTS

There were none.

47. GRAZING UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported on a meeting that took place with Peter Niccolls last Friday, 1st September with a view to him taking on the grazing at Ballard Water Meadow. Peter had emailed this morning, as follows:

“Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me and show me the grazing on Friday. It is a brilliant opportunity for someone, but unfortunately it is just a bit too far away from us and the TB test requirements as we are a forest herd make it too complicated. If you want to advertise again, send the wording to me I can share it locally with various different groups etc and hopefully help find someone for you.”

The Chairman advised that other avenues are now being explored and consideration is being given to different types of cattle, eg. Herefords. An advertisement will be drafted for a new grazier at Ballard Water Meadows.

48. CARRICK WAY/ASHINGTON PARK

Jill Colclough referred to Appendix 2 which had been circulated previously. She stated that so far as Ashington Park is concerned, the contract has been agreed and is due to start next Monday. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is still to be signed. From an NMTC perspective it is risk free, there is no financial commitment.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had read through the MOU, and all appears to be in order, so would sign it following this meeting, as requested.

Jill then moved onto Carrick Way. This is not her project it is being run by her colleague Nicole who had provided Jill with a brief so she could report back. The contract will be put out as a design and build contract so that the contractor who is selected will sort out the details of the work once on site, obviously in accordance with the agreed design. There will be two crossings of the stream incorporated, and new footpaths within the design as well.

Jill stated that so far as these enhancement works are concerned, they would both be good sites for input from the Friends of Ballard Water Meadow group in order to bring the woodland areas up to standard. This is work they have done on other sites. They will both also be good sites for Paul Brockman’s woodland craft lessons to be held.

49. STREET TRADING

The Town Clerk advised that the Working Party met on 3rd August to discuss the current situation of trading and possible future options for an action plan, noting the following points:

- The traders have now been advised that street trading is under review, and they are pleased that they will be consulted.
- The traders have been informed of increased pitch fees which will be levied from 4th October onwards. Pitch fees are now £1.50 per foot.
- The Fruit and Vegetable trader will now be providing their own recycling bin and the Town Council agreement with NFDC to provide one will cease on 30th September.
- All in all, the changes should lead to a net return of around £6,000 per annum after running costs.

TDM and Estates Manager will be working together on the consultation with local businesses, street traders and the public and preparing questionnaires to send out. The matter will be brought back to the next Amenities Committee meeting on 16th October for further consideration.

50. ALLOTMENTS

The Estates Manager advised that he had been out to inspect the allotment sites and identified a number where improvement notices were needed, if there is no improvement within a month their tenancies will be terminated. Four tenancy termination notices have already been sent to tenants who have not made improvements following earlier warnings.

He advised that at Lymington Road, there are 3 vacant plots from which 7 new plots could be provided. At Middle Ashley, there are 4 vacant plots which could be made into 8. And at Upper Ashley, 14 new plots could be created from the 5 currently available. All in all, there will be a total of 25 plots to offer to those on the waiting list, that currently stands at 44.

51. COL WHEELERS GRAVE

The Chairman advised that the Estates Manager had obtained a quote for the repairs to Colonel Wheeler's grave, in the sum of £130. Following a discussion and a vote

It was:

RESOLVED: That the Town Council take over the upkeep of Colonel Wheeler's grave.

52. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Chairman advised that costings for ASB are still being finalised, but from April to August this year it cost around £50k with £10k being spent on clearing up after travellers and around £40k on making good other ASB around the town, mainly on the War Memorial Recreation Ground in the centre of the town, and at Ashley Recreation Ground.

This item will be brought back to the next Amenities meeting when further half-year costings will be available. In the meantime, the Town Clerk is arranging a meeting with Chief Inspector Marsden and Cllrs S Clarke and S Davies to discuss ASB issues in the town.

53. CHAIRMAN'S ITEMS

The Chairman had no items to mention but took the opportunity to thank the Estates Manager and the green spaces team for all their hard work in keeping the town looking so good.

Cllr D Hawkins stated that while he had been at the Afternoon of Music on Sunday he heard many good things from residents about the look of the town and about how grateful they are for the afternoons of music.

54. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 16th October 2023 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 7.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Minute	Action Points	Action by date	To be actioned by
42	Community Garden ops items	16.10.23	Estates Manager
44 c)	BT Openreach phone boxes	16.10.23	Estates Manager
47	Advertise for Ballard Grazier	16.10.23	Town Clerk
48	Carrick Way/Ashington Park woods	ASAP	Jill Colclough, NFDC
49	Street Trading consultation	16.10.23	TDM / Estates Manager
50	Reduce Allotments Waiting List	ASAP	Estates Manager
51	Maintain Col Wheeler's grave	On-going	Green Spaces Team
52	Meet with Police regarding ASB	12.09.23	Town Clerk

Distribution:

Town Councillors

Estates & Facilities Manager

District Councillor J L Cleary

County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, and K Mans

New Milton Police

Press

Alan Watson – NewMilton.net

Sue Larking – NMRA