

The financial health of our traders is key to the vitality of our town and we want to encourage all residents, residents of other towns and holiday makers to visit our town and enjoy the experience. We have Gold award winning floral displays in the town centre coupled with probably the best in the area Christmas lights.

The Go NEW MILTON web site has been developed and is managed by this Council. It provides a shop window for each and every trader to advertise their products and services via the web site. Holiday makers can now see what our town offers before leaving home. We are a dementia friendly town; this Town Council has worked with the Local Dementia Action Group and our shops to embrace the initiatives from the Group and to provide a dementia safe shopping environment. All these activities and initiatives are designed to make shopping in our town a better and more enjoyable experience and to encourage holiday makers to visit our town.

It is clear to see we also care about the financial health of the traders in our town.

Using the government public health advice at the time we made the decision to seek approval from the Highways Authority and worked with Hampshire Highways to implement the two road closures in the town.

Unlike individuals, local councils are legally bound to make the environment safe, so we did what we believed was right in the circumstances based on central government guidelines.

Over the intervening period the situation has changed, and the public health risk is possibly lower than hitherto.

It has been reported in the local press that there have been no Corona Virus deaths in the BCP area for 3 weeks and only one in the New Forest in the same period.

I have therefore called this extra ordinary meeting of the council to consider all the road closure options.

The options before us are:

- a. Do nothing and keep the road closures as is until the government advice removes the need for social distancing.*
- b. Remove both road closures and not worry about social distancing or public health,
or*
- c. Modify the road closures in such a way as to preserve social distancing in the high footfall area.*

I purposely changed the order of business so we could hear the views of residents and traders before our debate.

It is now time to hear your views, and I will call you each in turn.

143. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None144. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to an email from Chloe Jenkins from NFDC Electoral Services regarding the Town Councillor vacancy in Barton advising that we could now advertise to co-opt a new member.

Cllr K Craze asked about the next steps of the process. The Town Clerk referred to the attached procedure (Co-option Procedure).

145. ROAD CLOSURES

The Chairman went out of session and invited Alan Watson, representing NMRA, to comment regarding the road closures. Mr Watson confirmed receipt of many emails with the majority being positive and some negative, as well as noting that NMRA member Annette Hunter had said that footfall had fallen at the top end of Station Road.

The Chairman asked Ward Councillors to comment first with Cllr S Davies saying he was impressed with the signage in town and that common sense was key. He understood that the NFDC car parks are under-used but wanted to open up the town and allow free flow while still reinforcing the social distancing message.

Cllr Mrs V Schooling supports the public health initiative and understands that businesses need to increase footfall. Cllr S Clarke agreed with the previous comments but suggested that we remove the barriers and allow the public to take appropriate action as necessary.

Cllr K Craze said that social distancing is still key as there is still an endemic and was not in favour of a full removal of traffic restrictions except for the Osborne Road junction.

Cllr G Blunden provided a reminder that HCC and NFDC had sent a clear message about making shopping areas as safe as possible and now was the time to review particularly the Osborne Road closure.

Cllr H Wallis-Dowling appreciated the foregoing remarks but stated that as well as individual responsibility there was also a collective responsibility for the council to ensure public safety. Cllr A O'Sullivan was in favour of the removal of the Osborne Road closure but stated that we should keep the traffic restrictions as social distancing is still an issue around the Nobel's/Kimber's junction.

Cllr M Craze supported the removal of the Osborne Road closure but said to keep the Nobel's/Kimber's closure. Particularly as we approach the winter months and with the

epidemic at large. Suggesting businesses could encourage footfall by being more aware of customers' needs at the front doors of their businesses.

Cllr J Ward referred to the situation in Cornwall where all traffic is stopped from entering town centres between the hours of 11am to 6pm and suggested perhaps a ring road system around New Milton be considered. Members acknowledged the pinch point at Nobel's/Kimber's, as well as the council's responsibility for social distancing and encouraging good health of the community, as well as the effect of the Covid crisis on our town's economy.

Cllr Schooling asked about feedback from the public on the road closures and the Estates Manager said there had been a total of 20 emails with 16 about Osborne Road and the other 4 in general about Station Road.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to refer to comments from absent Councillors. Cllr Hawkins was in favour of removing the Station Road / Osborne Road closure. Cllr Brownsea supported the removal of both road closures. Cllr Tungate said people are simply ignoring the measures implemented, adding the closure of Osborne Road was pointless. However, if it was generally agreed that some restrictions should remain, he would support a reduced system at the Station Road / Old Milton Road junction.

It was then proposed by Cllr S Davies that the Station Road / Osborne Road closure be removed and following a vote with a majority of 9 councillors in favour.

It was

RESOLVED: That the Station Road / Osborne Road closure be removed.

Cllr G Blunden proposed the Station Road / Old Milton Road closure stay in place and Cllr S Davies made a counterproposal that the Nobel's/Kimber's junction be opened eastbound.

A show of hands for the counterproposal was 4 in favour and 5 against.

A show of hands for the road closure including the Nobel's/Kimber's junction to stay in place was 6 in favour and 3 against.

It was

RESOLVED: That the Station Road / Old Milton Road closure be retained.

The Chairman did not participate in any of the show of hands.

Cllr Wallis-Dowling asked when we will review the road closures again and this will be at the next full Town Council Meeting on 10 August.

The Town Development Manager noted that encouraging the public and businesses to send their feedback and comments to the info@newmiltontowncouncil.gov.uk email address is working well and that we should encourage this method of communication.

HCC Cllr M Kendal thanked Members for their comments which he would review with HCC.

146. ANY ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman asked the attendees for any other comments.

Chris March asked for a copy of the Mayor's opening statement and Mr Watson asked when there would be a formal statement about the road closures and when the removal of the Osborne Road closure would take place.

147. NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will take place on **Monday 10 August 2020** at 6.30 pm.

The Chairman thanked Councillors, members of the public, officers and press for attending and closed the virtual meeting at 2.05pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____

Distribution:

Town Councillors
District Councillor Mrs J L Cleary
County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, K Mans
New Milton Police
Press
Alan Watson – Focus & NMRA
Mark Jeffries – Estates & Facilities Manager