


Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of New Milton Town Council held on Monday 19 December 2022 at 6.30 pm in New Milton Town Hall.

Chairman D N Tungate
 Vice-Chairman p S P Davies

Councillors: p K Craze p S J Clarke
 p R A Reid p A D O'Sullivan
 J Ward M Brownsea
 p G R Blunden

In Attendance:

Councillor: D Hawkins
 Officers: G Flexman - Town Clerk
 J Bean – Committee/Comms/Administrative Assistant

The Chairman welcomed members and officers, together with one member of the public.

The Chairman spoke about the very sad death of Councillor Alan Rice last week and paid a tribute to him as a longstanding and well-respected member of the community and indeed the Town Council. A minute's silence was then observed as a mark of respect.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Adrian Duckett of Men's Shed spoke about his frustration with the fact that the lease had not yet been completed. He was finding it difficult to explain the delay to his funders and members, the process had started back in May. He expressed the hope that it would be completed soon. He then thanked the Council for their ongoing support and wished the members a merry Christmas.

 69. APOLOGIES

Cllrs Neil Tungate, John Ward and Mark Brownsea

 70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None. It was noted that members have a general dispensation to discuss and set a Budget and decide on a Precept for 2023/24.

 71. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk for an update on the Men's Shed lease. He too was frustrated at the delay but is hopeful that all matters are close to resolution and that the lease should be ready to be signed by 3rd January 2023, subject to a nominal rent being agreed as advised by our Internal Auditor.

 72. MINUTES
RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2022, previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.



The Minutes were duly signed.

73. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE

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

Minute	Action Points	Action by date	To be actioned by
59c)	FOC Car Parking - 26 Nov 2022	18.11.22	Town Clerk / NFDC
59d)	Prepare Annual CIL Report	31.12.22	Town Clerk / NFDC
59e)	Forward minute to Cllr E Heron	07.11.22	Town Clerk / HCC
60	September Payments Schedule	14.11.22	Town Council / Estates Manager
63	Sign Community Garden Licence	ASAP	Town Clerk
64	Men's Shed Lease preparation	ASAP	Council Solicitor
65 a / c	Grant Aid payments	ASAP	Assistant Clerk
65b)	Compass Counselling Check potential Interests	19.12.22	Assistant Clerk
65d)	Community Garden group Defer to next F&GP meeting	19.12.22	Town Clerk

- a) Cllr A Reid thanked Cllr S Davies for his contribution to the Open Sight grant application at minute 65a).

Cllr S Davies advised that he had been very touched by the presentation at the last meeting and the valuable work which Open Sight does and plans to pay them a visit in the New Year to see their work in action.

- b) The Town Clerk referred to the Post Meeting Note to minute 65b relating to the Grant Aid application by Compass counselling. The fact that the Members know Moira Swayne who is involved in the charity represents a non-pecuniary interest, and it is for each councillor to decide if they are biased or not.

The Members agreed that they were not biased by their relationships with Moira and would consider the application on its merits. Therefore, the application could fall to be determined in the usual way and no declarations were necessary.

- c) In regard to Minute 63, the Community Garden Licence is now ready for signature.

74. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to the following items of correspondence:

- a) An email from Tim Nathan, NFDC Project Manager – Housing Strategy & Development stating that he would investigate removing the pine trees at the Moore Close boundary with the Community Garden to enable work to commence in advance of the proposed development on their side of the boundary. Tim stated he will initially discuss this in house and come back once those discussions are complete.



- b) An email from Hampshire CC showing the Indicative Pricing for energy supplies from 1/4/2023 will rise by 3-4% and translate into an increase of around £150 per site. The Council was fortunate to have joined the Laser Agreement with Hampshire CC for supplies that are protected until September 2024.
- c) An email from Andy Rogers advising of a 4.04% increase to be applied to the basic and special responsibility allowances for Members of New Forest District Council, the Town Council should decide what, if any adjustments should be made to their scheme. NMTC pay 15% of the NFDC allowance.
- d) An email from SAAA (Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments) advising that BDO LLP would be appointed as external auditors from 2022-23 to 2026-27 in place of KPF Littlejohn, both being Southampton based.
- e) A letter from NFDC enclosing a precept claim form for the year 2023-24 the form is to be returned by 13th January. The proposal is to pay one half of the precept on 30 April 2023 and the other half on 30th September 2023. It was noted the number of taxable properties had reduced by 0.70 to 10,624 precisely.

75. BUDGET PROPOSALS

a) Amenities Committee

The Town Clerk advised that the Amenities Budget proposal generally consisted of a 10% rise across the board including fees and charges, and some rounded increases where levels had remained static for a long while, eg Public Tennis and Bowls.

Cllr Blunden spoke in favour of the Amenities Budget and proposed its acceptance.

Cllr A Reid said that he objected to any increase in the budget at this time in order to reduce the burden on taxpayers in the town and asked that his vote be recorded.

Following a vote,

It was

RECOMMENDED: That the Amenities Budget in the sum of £674,304 and Fees & Charges for 2023/24 be adopted by the Town Council.

Cllr R A Reid voted against.

b) F & GP Committee

The Town Clerk took members through the F & GP Committee budget in detail line by line starting with salaries which represent 50% of the total costs. Nationally a recent increase of £1,925 per full time employee was agreed and this was backdated to April. A similar rise of £2,000 is budgeted for next year with the knock-on effect on National Insurance and Superannuation. Staff expenses and staff training budgets were kept at the same level. There were slight increases in the budgets for telephony, postage, stationery and photocopying although efforts continued to be made to reduce copying and physical postage with the use of scanning and email.

The budget for Events had been increased substantially, reflecting increased events following lockdowns and covid. The Youth Coordination budget remained the same as last year and TDM and Communications budgets remain at the same level. The Legal and Professional fees, IT Admin Support and bank charges budgets have all increased in line with inflation. The budget for CANGO Booking Service remained at the same level, although the service is likely to be withdrawn from June.



The budget for election expenses is £20K with £5K in reserves, noting the actual cost of elections will be circa £23K NFDC recently informed us. Mayor's Allowance, Twinning and Members Allowances will remain the same, as will the budget for Members' Training which had not been spent this year. One of the members does not take their allowance, it was noted, hence the budget remains the same.

The Chairman asked if the training budget would be used for training which members requested, and the Town Clerk advised that this would be the case.

The Grant Aid budget remains the same at £5K, and there was still some money left in that budget for this year. The self-imposed £500 limit per application would also continue.

So far as Youth Grant Aid is concerned, the budget for next year is £15K.

In relation to Town Hall rent, a 21-year lease was signed in 2003 this is coming up for renewal in 2024/25, and other suitable accommodation may need to be found.

All in all, there is a need to increase expenditure by nearly £80k from £1.2m projected outturn this year to £1,279,891 budget next year. In order to make this more acceptable to the public, the proposal is to take monies from reserves to help peg back the precept.

Cllr D Hawkins said he could not support any increase at this time of austerity.

Cllr A O' Sullivan stated that he could not understand why the increase in budget could not be financed from reserves.

Cllr Reid stated that he represents one of the most deprived areas of the New Forest and could not vote for this budget.

Cllr G Blunden stated that he felt that if the Council fail to acknowledge the effect of inflation or simply absorb it this year, it could be storing up problems for the future.

Cllr S Clarke observed that BCP Council was now working hard to avoid bankruptcy even though their finances had been healthy when the amalgamation took place, we should avoid a similar situation, we need to be realistic.

Cllr K Craze stated that there are external pressures at the moment including inflation but there are also many projects which the Council wants to carry out, we need to be realistic.

Cllr Blunden proposed the budget be accepted, and this was seconded by Cllr Clarke.

Cllr A Reid proposed it should be rejected and referred back to Standing Committees with a recommendation of no increases and this was supported by Cllr A O'Sullivan.

Following a vote,

It was

RECOMMENDED: That the F&GP budget in the sum of £605,587 be adopted by Town Council.

Cllrs A D O Sullivan and R A Reid voted against. Other members of F&GP voted in favour of the budget proposals.

An overall Budget of £1,279,891 in total (Amenities £674,304 plus F&GP £605,587) was recommended for next year.


76. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1, being Schedule of Payments, for the period from 1 October to 30 November 2022 in the sum of £348,587.45, as previously distributed. The Town Clerk highlighted the following items over £1,000:

a)	Lombard vehicle leasing x 4 + hire of Nissan Rapid	£1945.99
b)	Citizens' Advice – New Forest – Grant Aid	£5,000.00
c)	Gristwood & Toms – Tree works September	£10,497.74
d)	HCC – Pension Contributions September 2022	£10,043.90
e)	HMRC – Tax and NIC September 2022	£8,890.75
f)	NMSB - Hedge cutting/veg clearance/bench installation/reinstatement/Ashley green route footpath work/general waste site wide/Long Meadow stream clearance/hedge removal Ashley	£2,924.14
g)	Salt and Heather – Preparation of outline Planning Application for proposed Youth and Family Hub, Milton Barns, New Milton	£2,200.00
h)	John Shutler – Tree Service – Undertake Ash dieback safety service/10 sitemaps	£1,074.00
i)	SparkX – Christmas Lighting preparations including power box to ground floor southern elevation at Brewers/installation of brackets and eyelets at M & S /eyelet and bulb installation at McColls	£2,622.00
j)	WP Group – Fawcetts vehicle and machinery fuel storage	£6,050.00
k)	Nightsearcher – Sports Star rechargeable training lights for Youth Services	£2,766.94
l)	Npower – Electricity supplied to Spencer Road/Mallard Court/Fawcetts Main site/Ashley Pavillion/Talking Newspaper from 1-31 August 2022	£1,050.04
m)	Complete Weed Control – Autumn/winter weed & feed re Ashley & Fawcetts – End of Season Pitch Maintenance	£1,919.78
n)	Cripps Pemberton – Fees re licence & extra consents re electricity box – 61 Station Road (Boots: MURAL MENCAP/Defibrillator)	£1,500.00
o)	M A Hart Asphalt – Carry out works to construct new footway – green routes and car park extension/general site clearance (Ashley project) – Section 106 and Green Route - CAPEX	£78,300.00
p)	Keffen Plant Hire – Flail hire – carry out flail hedge cutting at Ashley/Lym Rd allotments and Naish/Hollandswood open spaces	£1,209.60
q)	LEDhouse – 50% deposit for hire of LED screen for the King's coronation – May 2023	£1,650.00
r)	Manor Grounds Maintenance – General works (2 men 4 days work) at £150 per day, plus £26.50 waste disposal and £40 van use.	£1,226.30
s)	Northfield Nursery – Supply of bedding plants – autumn /winter display	£1,199.88
t)	David Ogilvie – Supply and deliver Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pergola (CIL monies)	£7,014.00
u)	Staff/members- salaries/expenses/allowance October 2022	£29,176.41
v)	Lombard – leasing x 5 vehicles.	£2,332.87
w)	Natasha Beatty – to provide cookery education for daytime and evening courses on 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th and 22 nd November at £800 per course (Govt Welcome Back Fund)	£1,600.00
x)	HCC – Pension Contributions – October 2022	£9,817.80
y)	Tax and NIC – October 2022	£10,004.94
z)	L Kitcher Fencing – To replace broken fencing at Ballard Water Meadow (northern boundary) – HLS Stock Fencing	£7,800.00
aa)	John Shutler Tree Services – Storm works resultant from Ashley "tornado" on 30/10/2022	£5,572.00



ab)	Sitesafety – Barton Common Car Park – replacement height barrier (CAPEX project)	£3,865.22
ac)	Sparkx Ltd – 50% of agreed festive lighting contract/repairs from healthy check	£6,090.00
ad)	SPG Machinery – Stihl cordless machiner x 6 (CAPEX)	£2,451.08
ae)	Turfleet Hire – John Deere tractor/front loader monthly hire (Sep and Oct 2022)	£1,728.00
af)	HMRC – NI Underpayment – Sep 2022	£1,021.28
ag)	Tom Morrissey – General Works site wide 7 – 13 November (7 days) at £150 per day	£1,050.00
ah)	Gristwood & Toms – Completed Tree works – October 2022	£1,027.64
ai)	HAGS – The provision of play equipment and installation at Ashley Recreation Play area (Section 106)	£32,426.40
aj)	John Shutler Tree Services – Storm works arising from 31 October high winds and willow pruning at Caird Avenue CAPEX	£3,648.00
ak)	NMSB – Waste disposal recyclable/vegetation and wood waste	£1,624.60
al)	Smith of Derby – Replace existing clock mechanism and lighting with new movement control system – Memorial Clock on corner.	£2,731.20
aj)	Sparkx Ltd – repairs to Fire Station mature Holm Oak replace 5 strings damaged	£1,266.00
ak)	Staff/members – Salaries/expense/allowances November 2022 (includes £12K backdated pay rise from 1 April)	£42,872.57

Members queried the sums paid to:

- a) Screwfix - £56.92 for a broom, surely there were cheaper suppliers or was there more than one broom? (***Post Meeting Note: 4 brooms were purchased - one per changing room.***)
- b) Sparkx £1,266 for repairs to 5 strings on the Fire Station tree, what is the problem with this? Why are the strings breaking? (***Post Meeting Note: The strings are left in all year. Weather takes its toll and knocks them out of position, meaning passing lorries then catch on them. The same has happened in the past to the large Station Road trees and is a consequence of leaving them in, still the most cost effective.***)

It was then

RECOMMENDED:

Schedule of Payments No. 05/22/23 covering the period 1 October-30 November 2022, in the sum of £348,587.45 be ENDORSED for Town Council approval.

77. NOVEMBER ACCOUNTS

Chairman referred to Appendix 2, being Monthly Management Accounts for October 2022.

The results had benefitted from some one-off payments this year, including money from the Welcome Back fund of £6K, £30K for a development, £15K from Chewton Glen Concerts and £8K Govt Grant for covid signs.

The Town Clerk reported accounts show underspends of £61K for F&GP but that Amenities has gone over budget, slightly by £18K due to £233K of CAPEX already incurred.

This issue is due in part to further expenditure on the Ashley project which was initially budgeted at £150K but would cost around £83K more than originally planned at this stage. There is £80K currently unallocated in CIL reserves.



78. GRANT AID

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix 3, being 3 Grant Aid Applications as follows:

- a) Compass Counselling New Forest requested a grant of £2,000 per Appendix 3a.

After some discussion

It was

RESOLVED:

That Compass Counselling be granted £500 from the Grant Aid Budget under the General Power of Competence.

- b) New Milton Community Garden requested a grant of £2,000 per Appendix 3b
Following some discussion about whether monies could be used from CIL to award the full £2,000 and whether this project should be wholly funded by the Town Council or indeed if the Community Garden should look elsewhere for funding or raise money themselves. There was a feeling that the Town Council had contributed a great deal to this project already and therefore,

It was

RESOLVED:

That New Milton Community Garden be granted £500 from the Grant Aid Budget under the General Power of Competence.

- c) New Forest Disability Information Service requested a discretionary grant in line with previous years, where grants of £500 had been awarded per Appendix 3c.

It was

RESOLVED:

That New Forest Disability be granted £500 from the Grant Aid Budget under the General Power of Competence.

79. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUTURE LEVY

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix 4 being a report on CIL receipts and expenditure for the reported year 2021/22. The report clarifies what CIL monies may be spent on and how much remained unspent at 31 March 2022.

80. INTERNAL AUDIT

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix 5 - the First Interim Audit report for 2022/23.

The Chairman highlighted the following paragraph from the report being of interest...

In relation to the Council's forward planning, we note that the Clerk/RFO and Members have made all reasonable efforts to implement the recommendations made in our prior year reports and continue to undertake a thorough budgetary process (which is commented on later in this report) and focus on the provision of services to constituents and the promotion of New Milton as a shopping destination and business friendly town.

Members' attention was drawn to Action Plan recommendations at the end. It was,

RECOMMENDED: That the Internal Audit Report be adopted by Town Council.


81. YOUTH WORK

The Town Clerk reported that the job description for a Youth Co-ordinator has been written and the new role will be advertised in the New Year.

An invoice was received from the former Youth Services Manager, now a contractor.

There was a general feeling expressed by several councillors that the hourly rate is unsustainable, and that she should obtain prior agreement before carrying out any work, giving an idea of how long it would take and therefore what it would cost.

Cllr G Blunden felt that the Youth and Play work now fell under the auspices of the Youth Trust and therefore, attendance at this is as a Trustee of the Trust rather than on behalf of the Town Council.

The Town Clerk was asked to relay all the above information to the former YSM.

82. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATES

The Chairman read out a message from Cllr N Tungate who thanked everyone for their support and messages in the past few weeks. He also reminded people to donate to Oakhaven Hospice if they had not done so already.

83. NEXT MEETING – **Monday 30th January 2023 at 6.30pm in Town Hall, New Milton.**

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.45pm.

CHAIRMAN _____ DATE _____

74c)	Review Members' Allowances	30.01.23	Asst Town Clerk
74e)	Return Precept Claim Form	13.01.23	Town Clerk
75a)	Endorse Amenities Budget	03.01.23	Town Council
75b)	Endorse F&GP Budget	03.01.23	Town Council
76)	Endorse Payments Schedule	03.01.23	Town Council
78a)	Compass Grant Aid £500	30.01.23	Asst Town Clerk
78b)	NM Community Garden Grant Aid £500	30.01.23	Asst Town Clerk
78c)	NFDIS Grant Aid £500	30.01.23	Asst Town Clerk
80)	Adopt Internal Audit Report	03.01.23	Town Council
81)	Town Clerk to write to consultant	ASAP	Town Clerk



82)	Oakhaven Hospice	ASAP	Members
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Distribution:

Town Councillors

Estates & Facilities Manager

District Councillors J L Cleary

County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter and K Mans

New Milton Police

Press

Alan Watson – FOCUS & NMRA