**For Town Council Meeting 13th February 2023**

# ***Shop Doctor Programme with New Forest District Council***

One cold Wednesday in January, I excitedly joined the New Forest Shop Doctor Programme as we visited the independent retail and hospitality businesses on our high street, in eager anticipation to sign-up those who were interested in this supportive initiative. The programme very quickly met maximum capacity. Due to such enthusiasm, the Shop Doctor offered to extend the number of entrants, to which I gratefully accepted. The programme is free to join and provides a series of mystery shopper visits to participating businesses. The initiative will improve customer experience and will positively support businesses in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. With tips and advice, the participant is presented with a detailed confidential report and a certificate, plus the opportunity to attend a publicised event at the Town Hall later this year.

# ***Community Fridge***

A community fridge would be a useful resource for New Milton. One of my aims is to seek a suitable location to set up a community fridge. Ideally this would be in close proximity to the high street and public transport. A community fridge is a site where local people and businesses can share surplus food, this includes supermarkets, local food businesses, households and gardens. The idea is to reduce food waste and provide food to those who may need it and can best use it. A community fridge will not only bring people together, it helps address social isolation and provides people with the opportunity to access healthy food, try something new and save money. A fridge is often more than simply a fridge, they can host all kinds of activities such as cooking workshops, activities, meal preparation ideas and more. Fridges are run by community groups in community shared spaces such as schools, shops and community centres. One such interested location is New Milton Memorial Centre, who are keen to provide a space for a community fridge. The Memorial Centre are currently looking for support in setting up a Community Fridge. The food will need collecting on a daily basis with the help of volunteers to collect for them. The Centre has reported a universally experienced shortage of volunteers but is looking to address this.

# ***Socially prescribed cookery courses***

I am pleased to say the socially prescribed cookery classes held in conjunction with Coastal Medical Partnership, have received further support from New Forest District Council, with funding of £200 from Cllr Steve Clarke, £300 from Cllr Christine Ward and £800 from Cllr Neil Tungate. The fantastic news means the classes can continue further into 2023, whilst we seek future funding. The classes are producing outstanding results not only in the general health and wellbeing of the participants but also on a socially supportive level. Each participant learns how to prepare and cook a low carb, healthy meal with the focus on those who are diabetic or borderline diabetic.

# ***Coronation***

New Milton Town Council will be hosting a big screening of His Majesty King Charles III Coronation on Saturday 6th May 2023. The event will take place on New Milton Recreation Ground and will include food, live entertainment, music, stalls and activities for all the family. Visitors are welcome to bring a picnic and set up to share a fun filled day celebrating this historic event with the local community. Local arts groups and businesses will be joining us and a sheltered screening will also be held in New Milton Memorial Centre.

# ***Police working with the council to meet with local businesses***

New Milton Town Council teamed with New Milton Police to set up an informal meeting with the local business community. The first meeting, held in January, gave business owners and their representatives an opportunity to discuss face-to-face, the issues they are currently facing in the town. Held at the Town Hall, we aim to raise and address current concerns from all sides, find solutions and pull together business owners, the council and police. A second meeting is scheduled in February, with the intention for further regular meetings of this nature.

# ***Building relationships***

A key part of my role is to build relationships and create links between businesses and the community of New Milton. Recent introductions and meets include Drew family estate, Kingfishers Care Home and BCP Council planning department.