

## NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON  
MONDAY 4 JANUARY 2021 AT 6.30PM VIA ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATION.

Councillors:	p A Reid (Chairman)	p K E Craze (Vice-Chairman)
	M Brownsea	D A Rice-Mundy
	p G R Blunden	A W Rice
	p S J Clarke	p A D O'Sullivan
	p M Craze	p V E Schooling
	p S P Davies	p D N Tungate
	p D E Hawkins	p C V Ward
	p R Murrow	p J G Ward
	p H Wallis-Dowling	p D Samber

In Attendance:	Officers:	G Flexman	-	Town Clerk
		E Towler	-	Business Administrator
		M Jeffries	-	Estates & Facilities Manager
		S King	-	Town Development Manager

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, four Officers, one member of the public and a press representative as well as HCC Councillor F Carpenter to the first virtual meeting of 2021 and wished everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year.

### 199. APOLOGIES

Cllrs M Brownsea, D Rice-Mundy and A Rice

### 200. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman shared his disappointment at the vandalism of our Christmas tree at Barton on Sea and Cllr Murrow suggested a CCTV camera be located there which would be referred to the Amenities Committee.

### 201. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members have a general dispensation to agree a council budget and set a precept.

### 202. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 16 November 2020.

It was then

#### **RESOLVED:**

***That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 16 November 2020, having been circulated, be confirmed, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.***

203. CORRESPONDENCE

- a) A letter received from the Branch President of the RBL asking whether the Town Council would consider relocating the information tablet on Colonel Wheeler to a more visible spot. It was agreed this item be referred to the Amenities Committee.
- b) A reminder from the Assistant Town Clerk on the Equality & Diversity Training taking place on Thursday 7 January 2021 and the Core Values Workshop taking place on Tuesday 12 January 2021, both through Zoom Video Communications. Further details on the above will be sent in due course.
- c) An email from Alan Watson of the Lions Club enquiring about the Council's stance on Car Boot sales this year that usually start in April, as well as major Recreation Ground events and Afternoons of Music. It was agreed by members that whilst it is impossible to predict at the moment, organisers should be aware that they could be cancelled at short notice and any Council decision will be in line with prevailing Government legislation. The matter would be regularly reviewed by Amenities.
- d) Cllr Hawkins asked whether a letter could be sent by the Chairman of the Council to David and Alison John thanking them for their service to Ashley Baptist Church and the local community over the course of 15 years, and this was agreed.

204. QUESTIONS – None205. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

HCC Cllr F Carpenter confirmed that Welfare operations are still continuing at HCC which covers assistance with food, prescriptions and care to name a few. If people require assistance during lockdown, the number to call is 0333 370 4000.

On the 12 January 2021, there will be a meeting held on-line by the Culture & Communities Committee who will be looking at climate change. The discussion can be viewed on YouTube or on the HCC website.

District Cllrs J Ward and Blunden had nothing to report.

District Cllrs C Ward, S Davies and N Tungate attended several Task & Finish Groups that they will report on at a later date. Cllr C Ward has sponsored a tree under the Town Council *Plant a Tree* scheme.

District Cllr K Craze noted that part of his Community funding has gone to the New Milton Dementia Allotment to support them at this difficult time, as well as sponsoring a tree under the *Plant a Tree* scheme.

District Cllr Clarke noted the rise in fatal animal accidents in the New Forest and wished to remind people to drive safely and at a suitable, slower speed, even if it is not always the speed limit. He too has sponsored an elm under *Plant a Tree* scheme.

District Cllr O'Sullivan had nothing to report but is also sponsoring a tree under the above scheme at Long Meadow.

206. COMMITTEE REPORTSa) Planning Committee

Cllr Clarke, Chairman of the Planning Committee, submitted minutes of the Committee Meetings held on 19 November, 3 and 17 December 2020 and moved their adoption.

Cllr Clarke noted that the Aldi application (20/11029) will be discussed at the District Council Planning Committee meeting due to take place 13 January 2021.

It was then

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Minutes 325 to 352 inclusive be received.***

b) Amenities Committee

Cllr Blunden, Chairman of the Amenities Committee, submitted the Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 30 November 2020 and moved their adoption.

Cllr Blunden referred to minute 232 and wished to thank the Assistant Town Clerk and Grounds team for their effort towards this year's Christmas Lights display.

It was then

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Minutes 217 to 233 inclusive be received.***

c) Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Davies, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, submitted the Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 4 December 2020 and moved their adoption.

It was

**RESOLVED:**

***That Minutes 199 to 212 inclusive be received.***

d) Executive Committee

Cllr K Craze, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, submitted the Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 23 November 2020 and moved their adoption.

It was

**RESOLVED:**

***That Minutes 93 to 102 inclusive be received.***

207. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Payments, previously circulated, was submitted for Council approval.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:**

***That the Schedule of Payments 05/20/21 in the sum of £213,862.07 for the period 1 October - 30 November 2020 be approved.***

**208. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS SERVING ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

Cllr K Craze provided an update on the No.1 Station Masters House project with SWR reporting contractor quotes coming in over budget, with a virtual meeting being arranged shortly to discuss the next steps. Cllr Blunden provided an update on the New Milton Youth Trust. A meeting was held just before Christmas and they are actively seeking new trustees. Cllr Murrow had been in touch with Canteleu who were reported to be very pleased with the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tree planting at Ballard Lake.

**209. COUNCIL BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22**

The Chairman referred to the budget papers endorsed by the F&GP Committee.

The Chairman said that when developing the precept for 2021/22, we were mindful of the need to continue to serve our residents, the fact that many may have been furloughed or made redundant, inflation, the auditor's recommendation to increase our reserves, our commitment to improving youth services, town centre development in support of our businesses - a need to continue to promote New Milton as a shopping destination. Through hard work and analysis of every line item in the budget, the Chairman was pleased to present a precept to the Town Council that provided the above without increasing the burden on our residents. (Budget Commentary attached)

It was

***RESOLVED:***

***That the 2021/22 budget be accepted and a precept of £1,130,212 was approved.***

*RECORDED VOTE: Cllr J Ward voted against.*

**The Town Council element of Council Tax will be £107.48 next year for average Band "D" properties in New Milton. This equates to £2.06 per week per household and compares favourably with other town and parish councils in the district.**

**210. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1, External Audit report, previously circulated.

The Town Clerk confirmed PKF Littlejohn had recently signed off the annual accounts for 2019-20 making just one comment in regard to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, inasmuch as the AGAR was not completed accurately by our accountants before submission as far as a long-term investment of £250k (with Quilter Cheviot) was concerned, requesting that amendments are corrected on the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR, which was noted by members.

Cllr Blunden thanked the Town Clerk for his work on the above and undertaking a lot of the Internal Audit work on behalf of Auditing Solutions.

***It was***

***RESOLVED:***

***That the External Auditor Report for 2019/20 be approved and accepted.***

211. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2, Internal Audit report, previously circulated.

The Town Clerk read out the two recommendations and the proposed responses...

**Recommendations****Response****Review of Budgetary Control and Reserves**

R1

Whilst we note the healthy levels of the Council's earmarked reserves, however, the low level of the retained General Reserve should be reviewed with the Council's external accountants, a reserve level of between 6 - 12 months spending being more appropriate for a council with New Milton's operational span.

The General Reserve increased last year from £157k to over £250k, being equivalent to nearly 3 months precept and equal to the amount currently invested with Quilter Cheviot in a portfolio of accounts.

The Half Year precept for 2020-21 of £565k was received on 25 September 2020 and paid by NFDC into our main NatWest Bank Business Reserve Account which explains why so much was held then in that particular account.

**Review of Investments & Loans**

R2

With over one million pounds of its funds at risk, the Clerk and Members should now, move with all possible haste, to minimise the risk of having all of the Council's funds invested in one financial institution, by investing surplus funds elsewhere.

But the precept could be paid monthly by NFDC at the rate of £100k per month from May, and a total of £350k surplus NatWest funds held in 35-day & 95-day accounts could be invested elsewhere as they were previously via the Prudential, with Close Brothers and Investec.

***It was***

***RESOLVED:***

***That the Interim Internal Audit Report for 2020/21 be approved and accepted.***

212. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Chairman referred to Appendix 3, Calendar of Meetings for 2021 previously circulated.

The revised Calendar of Meetings showed a change to Amenities dates in July (now Tue 13<sup>th</sup>) and September (Tue 7<sup>th</sup>) due to clashes with NFDC council meetings.

213. CHARITY COMMISSION - ANNUAL RETURN

The Chairman referred to Appendix 4, being the Annual Return for 2019/20 for the War Memorial Recreation Ground Charity for the year ending 31 March 2020.

Members approved this ahead of it being submitted to the Charity Commission before the end of the month, with figures being updated online.

214. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chairman referred to Appendix 5, being a Neighbourhood Plan update.

Members noted the online Zoom meeting due to take place with Henry Pavey on Tuesday 12 January 2021.

215. TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The Chairman referred to the latest report from the Town Development Manager, previously circulated, which was noted by members.

The report included the importance of supporting the Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan approach endorsed by Government with the internal organisation and external stakeholders being approached as part of the consultation process.

216. NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will take place on **Monday 15 February 2021** at 6.30pm via Zoom.

The Chairman thanked members, officers, the public and press for attending and closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

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