

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD
ON MONDAY 23 JUNE 2025 AT 6.30PM IN NEW MILTON TOWN HALL**

Councillors: p J Adams p P Moores
p J Baker p R Murrow
p G Blunden p A D O'Sullivan
p S Clarke p R A Reid - Chairman
D Rice-Mundy- Vice Chairman p D N Tungate
p M Craze V Schooling
p S Davies p M Scott-Johns
W Davies K Trehorn
p D Hawkins p R Maynard

In Attendance:

G Flexman - Town Clerk

J Bean – Administrative Office

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, Officers, the Headteacher of the Arnewood School, two members of the public and a representative of the press. The Chairman brought the Public Participation element forward to the beginning of the meeting.

Jamie Anderson, the Headteacher of the Arnewood School addressed the meeting. He spoke about the Ofsted inspection 12 months ago which had been bruising. He stated that since then he and the staff had worked tirelessly to initiate improvements. They were being assessed by multi-academy trusts and were getting good responses. He feels that the changes that have been made are significant and sustainable.

He is keen to engage with the community including the Town Council, the Youth Trust and the Ashley Hub. And to ensure that the Arnewood becomes a well thought of and thriving local school and first choice in the area. He advised that the school is facing a serious challenge in terms of a big demographic dip. The current school year cohort is around 220 but falling numbers mean that going forward it will be around 150 per year group. He said that this had been identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. The decrease in the roll will lead to much of the school building not being used, and he is keen to liaise with other groups that might be able to make use of them.

He is currently implementing strategies to incorporate alternative provisions at the school to encourage some of the children and families who have opted out of state education and who do not cope so well in a traditional setting back to the school.

Cllr S Clarke spoke about his work with NMYT and their work with children who do not thrive in the traditional classroom setting, commenting on how well this was going referring to Alternative Provision.

Mr Anderson explained that the alternative provision could sometimes involve adapting the times of lessons, or indeed the content of the curriculum. He mentioned that 20 families had chosen to take their children out of mainstream education just this year. He has been in talks with HCC to discuss having a nurture hub in the school. This is more like a forest school and incorporates other lessons such as cooking alongside the standard lessons of English and Maths. This technique is effective at encouraging children back to school. He is hoping that Hampshire will provide the funds for the school to run a pilot.

Cllr D Hawkins mentioned that in the past Councillors had attended school council meetings and pupils had come to Town Council meetings as school ambassadors. He said that this had proved to be a worthwhile learning exercise for the Councillors and the pupils. He hoped that this could be resurrected.

Cllr J Baker asked about managing the funding with the falling numbers, Mr Anderson said that he is keen to keep a broad curriculum, but it could mean that subjects are offered in slightly different ways, if the full range are to be available. He also said that 150 pupils in a year group is a very good number, as it allows the school to get to know each pupil on a more personal level.

The Chairman thanked Jamie Anderson for attending the meeting and looked forward to forging closer ties between the school and the Town Council. He then opened the meeting formally at 6.45pm.

15. APOLOGIES

Cllrs D Rice-Mundy (work commitments), V Schooling (illness), K Trehorn (emergency) and W Davies (illness).

16. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that things had been quiet since he had been re-elected as Chairman for this year at the Annual Meeting on 13th May 2025, but he had attended the following events:

8th June Opening of the Community Garden

He took the opportunity to advise that he has chosen the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance as the Mayor's Charity for this year.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

18. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 13th May 2025.

It was

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 13th May 2025 having been circulated be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes from the meeting were duly signed.

19. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to an email received from a spokesperson at NFDC in relation to community banking in one half of the Town Hall meeting room, as follows:

- a) "The last session for Lloyds bank using this room will be Friday 18 July 2025."
- b) "From Wednesday 23rd July 2025, the current Halifax community banker will also be helping with Lloyds bank customer queries on their Wednesday session in the interview room. They have extended this booking until 10th December 2025."

It was noted Lloyds, Halifax and Bank of Scotland are part of the same group.

20. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

County Councillors

Cllr F Carpenter

Cllr Carpenter advised that she had nothing specific to report at this stage.

District Councillors**Cllr G Blunden**

Cllr G Blunden made the following comments in relation to the new rubbish collection implementation. After many months of planning our new, and improved waste and recycling service launched on Monday 9th June. The phase 1 area includes the areas of New Milton, Barton-on-Sea, Milford-on-Sea, Lymington, Brockenhurst and East Boldre, as well as a small number of rural properties in other parts of the district.

These changes have seen the first ever collections of waste and recycling wheeled bins in the district, and the first ever separate collections of food waste. We are already seeing the benefits of this new way of working coming to fruition. Just from driving around the district, you can see the immediate benefit on collection day, where we have seen a huge reduction in the amount of torn sacks and rubbish strewn across our streets. Our staff are now working with a modern, safer collection system so they can deliver this really important service without fear of injury from the sack collections. Our residents can now recycle food waste every week. In the first 7 days of the service, we collected 42 tonnes of food waste, which is now being diverted via incineration and being processed to generate cleaner electricity and fertiliser.

This rollout has been a monumental logistical exercise. There are 31,000 households in the phase 1 area, meaning we have had to deliver 124,000 wheeled bins and collection caddies. Any outstanding bin deliveries being reported to us by the public are being resolved.

As with any major service change, there will be a period of bedding in the new service. This kind of transformation cannot be implemented overnight, and minor disruption is anticipated in any project of this scale. But our crews have been working really hard, with new vehicles, new collection rounds and a new way of collecting waste and recycling. Despite all of this change, last week only 1% of collections have been reported to us as missed by the public.

We understand that change can be frustrating, particularly when it affects daily routines. But it is disingenuous to ignore the long-term benefits of a service that improves recycling, reduces waste, and modernises outdated practices. I want to thank residents for their patience during this transition and for working with us to reduce waste, improve recycling and comply with government guidelines.

Cllr S Clarke

Cllr Clarke advised that he had been chairing the NFDC Local Plan Task & Finish Group and that the plan will soon be ready for public consultation again with a number of important documents coming out shortly. He has also been chairing the climate change group who have had one meeting to date.

Cllr S P Davies said that the Housing Committee has been busy but had nothing specifically related to New Milton to report.

Cllrs A D O'Sullivan, J Adams, and D N Tungate had nothing to report.

21. COMMITTEE REPORTS**a) Planning Committee**

Cllr S Clarke, Chairman of the Planning Committee, submitted the minutes of the Committee meetings held on 13 and 22 May plus 5 June 2025 and moved their adoption.

Cllr Clarke provided an update on Minute 16 concerning the parking arrangements at the new Tesco. Some visitors are sensibly backing into the parking spaces, allowing them to drive forwards back onto the highway, but others are backing onto the highway, with poor visibility for them and for any vehicles coming over the bridge. There is a concern that the dangers have not been properly assessed by Hampshire, that they did not carry out an on-site assessment and suggested that a letter should be sent to them on behalf of NMTC to request that they do so. It was agreed that a letter should be directed to Hampshire Highways to ask them to come out for an on-site inspection.

The Town Clerk will draft a letter in conjunction with the Chairman of the Council and Assistant Town Clerk.

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 1 to 23 inclusive of the meetings held on 13 and 22 May plus 5 June 2025 be received.

b) Amenities Committee

Cllr G Blunden, Chairman of the Amenities Committee submitted Minutes of the Committee meetings held on 13 and 27 May 2025 and moved their adoption.

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 1 to 17 inclusive of the meetings held on 13 and 27 May be received.

c) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr D N Tungate, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee submitted Minutes of Committee meetings held on 13 May and 9 June 2025 and moved their adoption.

It was

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 1 to 18 inclusive of the meetings held on 13 May and 9 June be received.

22. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Payments, covering 1 – 30 April and previously endorsed by F&GP, was submitted for Council approval.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED:

That the Schedule of Payments No 01/25/26 in the sum of £155,455.28 for the period 1 – 30 April be approved.

The Schedule of Payments was duly signed by the Chair and Town Clerk.

23. TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT – WAR MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the Trustees Annual Report on the War Memorial Recreation Ground, containing the receipts and payments for the year 2024/25, as previously circulated.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED:

The Trustees Annual Report – War Memorial Recreation Ground for the year ended 31 March 2025 be approved.

The report was signed off by the Town Clerk and the Chairman.

24. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The amended Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, previously circulated as Appendix 2, were submitted for Council approval. F&GP having reviewed it page by page at their last meeting.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED:

That Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 be approved.

The Financial Statements were signed off by the Town Clerk and the Chairman.

25. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Chairman referred to Appendix 3 being the Internal Audit Report for 2024/25 received today.

The Town Clerk drew attention to the following paragraph in the report.

“As the issue over the failure to register the Tender for the Christmas Lights has already been identified, and reasonable and proportionate. Internal controls already adopted and established I have made no recommendation in this regard. However, as the failure to register the Tender correctly is a non-compliance with the Council’s currently adopted combined Standing Orders and Financial Regulations we have recorded a negative assertion against Internal Control Objective ‘B’ of the AGAR Annual Internal Audit Report.”

Cllr N Tungate was concerned that this was unusually pedantic as the contract exceeded the limit by a very small amount. Cllr G Blunden questioned how, in a marginal case, one would know that the limit would be exceeded.

The Town Clerk would pursue the matter further with the Internal Audit Manager.

It was then

RESOLVED:

That subject to the Christmas Lights Tender update, the Internal Audit Report for 2024/25 be approved and recommendations noted.

26. ANNUAL RETURN

The Annual Return for 2024/25, previously circulated as Appendix 4 was submitted for Council approval.

It was then unanimously

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Return for 2024/25 be approved and signed as follows:

a) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

The Annual Governance Statement was approved and signed off by the Town Clerk and Chairman.

b) Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25

The Accounting Statements 2024/25 were signed by the RFO in advance of the meeting, as per the updated form. The Chairman then counter-signed this at the meeting.

27. NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix 5 previously circulated being the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of the unaudited AGAR 2024-25 which will be displayed on the website and in the Town Hall window for exactly 30 days from 30th June 2025, as required by Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

28. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix 6 being a form to be completed for the external auditors BDO LLP (Limited Liability Partnership) confirming we have no conflict of interest with them.

The form confirming this was duly signed by the Town Clerk and the Chairman.

[Post Meeting Note: BDO stands for Binker Dijker Otte being an accounting group made up from the initials of the three founding European firms Binker (UK), Dijker (Netherlands) and Otte (Germany)]

29. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS SERVING ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr Alan O' Sullivan advised the Manager at Forest Arts has now left and moved on elsewhere. Forest Arts are in the process of appointing someone new.

Cllr Bob Murrow advised that current indications are that the 2026 twinning event will take place in May.

Cllr John Adams took the opportunity to mention that a new Rector at St Mary Magdalene is due to be appointed on 21st July 2025 (same day as F&GP).

30. TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The Chairman referred to Appendix 7 previously circulated being the Town Development Manager's report. Cllr Steve Clarke took the opportunity to thank the Town Development Manager for all her hard work on the Neighbourhood Plan which is currently undergoing Regulation 14 Consultation. He said that it had been a huge learning curve for Chiara who had risen to the challenge and done a splendid job over the last 2 years.

31. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Chairman referred to Appendix 8 previously circulated being the Communication Officer's Report which was noted with interest.

32. NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5 August 2025 at 6.30pm – Town Hall, New Milton.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and then closed the meeting at 7.20pm.

Town Councillors
District Councillors J L Cleary
County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, K Mans
New Milton Police
Press
Alan Watson – NewMilton.net
Sue Larking - NMRA
Mark Jeffries – Estates & Facilities Manager
Editor - Focus