

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 31 MARCH 2025 AT 6.30PM IN NEW MILTON TOWN HALL

Councillors:	p	J Adams		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	p	D N Tungate
	p	M Craze – Vice Chairman		V Schooling
	p	S Davies	p	M Scott-Johns
	p	W Davies		K Trehorn
	p	D Hawkins	p	R Maynard

In Attendance:

G Flexman - Town Clerk

J Bean – Administrative Officer

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, Officers, one member of the public and of the press.

120. APOLOGIES

Cllrs Moores, Trehorn, Schooling and Rice-Mundy.

121. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None.

122. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

21 st February 2025	Olive's 100 th Birthday celebration at Engleburn
1 st March 2025	Mayor's Tea Party at the Cliff House
8 th March 2025	NMRA AGM
13 th March 2025	Freemasonry in the Community Charity event
15 th March 2025	Unveiling of the Mural at New Milton Train Station
20 th March 2025	Groundbreaking Ceremony Becton Centre, Barton
23 rd March 2025	Chair of NFDC's Civic Event – St Mary Magdalene
23 rd March 2025	New Milton Music Festival Gala Concert

The Chairman also mentioned that he had attended 3 police surgeries.

He took the opportunity to remind the members about the Civic Celebration on Wednesday 9th April when the Community Champion, and Citizen of the Year will be announced as well as celebrating other members of the public.

123. MINUTES

The Chairman referred to minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 February 2025.

It was

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of Town Council Meeting held on 17th February 2025 having been circulated be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes were duly signed.

124. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to:

- a) An email from Susan Day of SGN advising that Walkford Road will be closed between Walkford Lane and Hurst Close for 14 weeks from 28th April as they are replacing the gas pipe.
- b) An email from a local resident in relation to the bank closures in the town, suggesting that the Town Council might offer premises to the banks so that they can provide an ongoing service in person. The Town Clerk advised that he had been in contact with Angie Hjerling the NFDC Information Offices Manager who is liaising with both Lloyds and Santander with a view to them booking a session at the Town Hall for community banking but had heard nothing so far. Halifax have been using an office every Wednesday and are considering continuing with that.

Post Meeting Note from Angie Hjerling, Information Offices Manager of NFDC

Happy to confirm that Lloyds Bank have today (01.04.25) signed a contract to use NMTH for their weekly community banking sessions. This will commence every Friday, 9am-3:30pm, 23rd May 2025 until 31st October 2025 (then be reviewed). They will be using half of the large meeting room (nearest to window). Lloyds will be dropping off some leaflets and posters to advertise the new service soon. This is a welcomed addition to support the local community alongside the already existing Halifax community banking, which is still being well used. Santander Bank have also been approached with regards to community banking, after news of their imminent branch closure in the high street. They have informed NFDC that New Milton has been highlighted for a community banking service and are keen to possibly utilise the New Milton Town Hall venue also.

125. REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**Cllr S Davies**

Cllr Davies reported that he had attended the groundbreaking event at the Becton Centre where Vivid Housing Association will be building 22 apartments which will be added to the NFDC housing portfolio. He had also visited sites in Fordingbridge and Totton where further properties are being built. He was impressed with the standards on both of those sites. He said that he will shortly be attending the groundbreaking for the Brockhills Estate and was looking forward to having 61 properties available there by the end of the year. He had also been working with the Freeport, exploring possibilities for employment and re-education.

Cllr G Blunden

Cllr Blunden stated that the new Waste Strategy and bin rollout is now underway. He advised that any queries directed to NMTC should be referred to NFDC who have a team to deal with them. He mentioned that there had been some issues in New Milton and that these had been resolved very quickly. He mentioned press coverage of the issues with Hurst Spit and that NFDC are not responsible but understands there are moves afoot to secure funding from other organisations to remedy the situation. He was sorry to say the recent storms had led to the loss of 50 beach huts at Milford.

Cllr S Clarke

Cllr Clarke advised that he had attended Aspen Place when residents had met with NFDC to resolve some issues. The meeting had gone well and the NFDC staff had focussed on coming up with solutions. He was impressed to see this first hand.

Cllr A O' Sullivan

Cllr O' Sullivan reported that all of the District Councils in Hampshire have now put forward their proposals in relation to the Devolution programme.

Cllr J Adams

Cllr Adams reported that he had been busy at NFDC, and with NPA quadrant meetings. He mentioned upcoming meetings on 9th April at Ringwood Gateway and 28th April in Lyndhurst, both aimed at Parish Councils, and both concerned with Devolution / LGR. He said that at the last NPA meeting a one third reduction in the DEFRA grant has been reported. And some changes to the involvement of the Planning Committee who will only deal with more significant planning issues. He said that Forestry England will be bringing in parking charges from next year. He had some good news about the forest's woodcock population which has increased significantly (press article attached).

Cllr Tungate had nothing to report at this stage.

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

Cllr Clarke, Chairman of the Planning Committee, submitted the minutes of Committee meetings held on 25 February, 13 and 25 March 2025 and moved their adoption.

It was

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 198 to 229 inclusive of the meetings held on 25 February, 13 and 25 March 2025 be received.

b) Amenities Committee

Cllr G Blunden, Chairman of the Amenities Committee submitted Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 3 March 2025 and moved their adoption.

It was

RESOLVED:

That Minutes 92 to 107 inclusive of the meeting held on 3 March be received.

c) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr D N Tungate, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee submitted Minutes of Committee meeting held on 17 March 2025 and moved their adoption.

It was

RESOLVED:

That minutes 102 to 115 inclusive of the meeting held on 17 March be received.

127. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Payments, covering January previously endorsed by F&GP, was submitted for Council approval.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED:

That the Schedule of Payments No 09/24/25 in the sum of £142,138.47 for the period 1 – 31 January be approved.

128. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS SERVING ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr A O' Sullivan read out a statement from New Milton Memorial Centre, as follows:

“As part of our journey towards being a cultural & community hub for the town, New Milton Memorial Centre have replaced our roof and appointed a new General Manager. Replacing the roof has left us short of funds. Little Acorns nursery is moving to new premises in Old Milton Road, after many years in which they (and the predecessor Little Angels nursery) have had sole use of part of upstairs. We are in negotiation with New Life Church to give them security of use of our upstairs rooms in return for a cash injection; this partnership may take the form of a 25-year lease on some rooms. This would allow us to upgrade certain aspects of the centre. We are launching a more regular programme of ticketed events, under the band “New Milton Hub”: dances, tribute bands, show. These should allow us to build back our reserves. Our next event is a VE80 concert on Saturday 3rd May. We will continue to provide a community facility for frequent NHS service, Royal British Legion meetings, Zumba, jive, Pilates, Weight watchers, ukulele group, Karate, Muslim prayer times etc. We will continue to be available for a wide range of occasional meetings: for the town council, residents’ association, RNLI, and others. We will also remain available for private bookings, whether parties or memorial services. We will still provide space for the Royal British Legion poppy appeal and annual town Remembrance Service. We will be sharing more of this vision at our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 30th April from 7pm.”

Cllr B Murrow provided the following update on the New Milton Dementia Allotment.

“We are pleased to report the old shed has been removed and a new shed now installed. Thank you to the Estates Team for completing this job. The volunteers are delighted. An opening date for the allotment will probably be arranged later in April. Posters will be created and shared with the Dementia Community. Following on from the success of the Coda Memory Band session last year, we will arrange further music sessions this summer. Councillors are very welcome to join us – come and say hello to the volunteers and meet our visitors.”

129. TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The Chairman referred to Appendix 1 being the TDM report which had previously been circulated. The report was noted. Cllr S Clarke advised that the TDM had put in a lot of time and effort to ensure that the public engagement was worthwhile and effective. He thanked her and the Councillors who attended for their hard work, noting both sessions were well attended with members of the local community asking valid and interesting questions. TDM is now collating the responses for further consideration.

130. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2 being the Communications Officer's Report which had previously been circulated. The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the new website is due to go live at the beginning of April. Cllr G Blunden thanked the Communications Officer for her hard work and said that her report is very helpful.

131. NEXT MEETING: Annual Town's - Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 6.30pm – Town Hall, Annual Meeting – Tuesday 13 May 2025 at 6.30pm, Town Hall.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 6.52 pm for the Democratic Half Hour.

DEMOCRATIC HALF HOUR

The Chairman asked if anyone wished to speak. Alan Watson advised that he had come to the meeting to invite all members to the opening of the Community Garden which takes place on 8th June, the event will start at 3pm.

He also took the opportunity to mention the Lions event on 4th May on the recreation ground for VE80. He said that there will be 70 stalls which will include a history of New Milton, Punch and Judy and the WI offering rationing tastings. He mentioned that there will be a Military Band and 3 military wives choirs performing. There will also be an old-fashioned fair.

Alan Watson then reminded members about the VE Commemoration concert taking place in the Memorial Hall on 3rd May.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and indeed for their support over the past year particularly when unwell last November, this being the final Council meeting this Mayoral year. The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.03pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____

Distribution:

Town Councillors

District Councillors J L Cleary, C Ward

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

Record numbers of woodlarks nesting in the New Forest, according to Forestry England and Hampshire Ornithological Society survey

Dan Goater

06 March 2025

RECORD numbers of a “key” ground nesting bird species have been found in the New Forest following efforts to encourage their return.

Conservationists conducting a survey for Forestry England alongside Hampshire Ornithological Society volunteers say they have just recorded the highest ever numbers of woodlarks.

Around 100 volunteers surveying some 300-sq-km of Forest recorded a total of 260 breeding pairs, describing it as a “big increase” from the 167 recorded during 2019.



Woodlarks are returning to the New Forest (picture: Steve Laycock)

The New Forest is a special protection area for birds and the survey, funded by the verderers' higher level stewardship scheme, was carried out to help assess the impact of Forestry England's work to boost the number of birds successfully breeding here.

Over the last 15 years, the organisation has returned large areas of Forest to heathland to create more of the habitat relied upon by rare and protected birds like woodlarks and other wildlife.

The surveyors said this work has made the Forest "one of the UK's most important locations" for woodlarks, with around 10% of the overall population estimated to be found here.

Senior ecologist at Forestry England, Leanne Sargeant, said:

"Many birds rely on lowland heaths to breed, yet this type of habitat is now rarer than rainforest.

"The New Forest has some of the most extensive heathlands left in Europe and we are restoring and managing these to provide as much of this critically important habitat as possible.

"We have more to do, but it's really rewarding to start to see species like the woodlark returning, and in such high numbers. Typically, these are one of the first species to return to restored areas and a good indication that the habitat is the right one.

"We are really grateful to all of the incredibly dedicated local volunteers who have spent many hours patiently watching and listening for these special birds."

Nigel Matthews, lead survey co-ordinator for Hampshire Ornithological Society:

"Anyone spending time in the New Forest will know that it is a special spot for birds and a great place to hear and see many different species.

"Luckily our volunteers enjoy doing this too. They have spent hundreds of hours listening for woodlark calls and songs, watching them feed and tracking their movements.

All of these observations have allowed us to create a full picture of the fortunes of these special birds, and it's really encouraging to know their numbers are so high."