

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCILMINUTES OF NEW MILTON ANNUAL TOWNS' MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY 30 APRIL 2021 AT 6.30PM VIA ONLINE ZOOM**CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Alvin Reid

TOWN CLERK

G P Flexman

IN ATTENDANCE

13 Town Councillors
24 members of the public and a press representative
Joanna Hayward (Communications Officer)
Theresa Elliott (Assistant Town Clerk)
Helen Ormerod (Admin Assistant)
Mark Jeffries (Estates & Facilities Manager)
Members of the Estates & Facilities Team

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the online Zoom meeting being the 41st Annual Towns' meeting since 1979, noting it should have been the 42nd but we were unable to hold the Annual Towns' Meeting in 2020 due to prevailing Covid restrictions.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Cllrs J Ward, M Brownsea, D Rice-Mundy, A Rice and Cllr Mrs V Schooling

2. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2019, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes would be duly signed in due course.

3. **INTRODUCTIONS – CHAIRMEN OF STANDING COMMITTEES****Amenities**

Cllr G Blunden, Chairman of Amenities Committee, explained that Amenities Committee are responsible for Town Council owned buildings, grounds, and facilities, including Allotments, Playparks, and 52 open spaces around the town.

Finance & General Purposes

Cllr S Davies as Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee said that the remit of the Finance & General Purposes committee is broad with overall responsibility for Council finance and personnel functions, youth services, plus grant aid.

Planning

Cllr S Clarke as Chairman of the Planning Committee said his committee makes recommendations on all planning applications and issues related to development and tree works at meetings which are held fortnightly, as well as the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan.

4. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Chairman expressed gratitude to his fellow Councillors for their support during his Mayoral year and thanked Deputy Mayor, Cllr Keith Craze for his continued efforts. The Chairman also thanked the Town Clerk for his support and advice during his Mayoral term of office, as well as the Communications Officer for her support, and all the staff and other members of the Council.

The Chairman summarised his year in office, being a year dominated by the Covid Pandemic affected by associated lockdowns and restrictions, sadly with no public or community events taking place.

However, throughout the year online Zoom meetings allowed the business of the Council to be conducted focusing on public health and well-being together with promoting the business health of our shopping areas and maintaining public facilities around town.

Apparent throughout the last year was the positivity and resilience adopted by the community with everyone willing to give their help voluntarily to others in need due to self-isolation or shielding.

Referring to the Mayor's nominated charity, Ashley Family Hub, acknowledgement and thanks were given to the Hub team for supporting our local families and even more so for rising to the challenges of the last year. The Mayor was pleased to have presented a cheque of £1,850 to Ashley Family Hub in December, an accumulation of donations from generous donors and the Collect Coppers for Charity Campaign.

A copy of the Annual Report is attached to these minutes.

5. SPECIAL MENTIONS

The Chairman referred to the nominations received for the Citizen of the Year award and gave special mention to Hannah Awesome, New Milton Covid Support Group, Alan Watson, Rotary Club Becton & District, New Milton Lions Club, Kathy Sirl, Helen Wallis-Dowling, New Forest Basics Bank and New Milton Town Council Estates & Facilities Team. Thanks were expressed for all their efforts and outstanding commitment to supporting the community.

6. CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2020/21

The Chairman was delighted to announce Hannah Awesome as Citizen of the Year 2020/21, in recognition of her outstanding contribution in rallying the community to respond to those in need during the Pandemic crisis.

Hannah had set up the New Milton Covid Support Group in March 2020, signing up 250 kindly neighbours, providing volunteer help to over 400 local residents in need of assistance, collecting shopping, being phone-buddies, dog-walking and collecting prescriptions.

7. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman introduced New Milton resident, Paul Brockman BEM, Woodland Consultant and Woodland Skills teacher and founder of Woodlander Coppice who provide a range of woodland and nature awareness teaching in the heart of the New Forest. Paul spoke about his life "*Tramp in the Woods to a BEM Award*" and recounted his inspiration for following the path of Social Worker to developing educational programmes for young people, the next generation of nature's guardians. For which he was recently awarded the BEM in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

8. QUESTIONS

- a) New Milton resident, Bob Lord, thanked the Council for supporting the New Forest Bee Rescue Campaign and asked if the Council would adopt a 'No Mow May' to allow for wildflowers to bloom for pollinators.

Cllr G Blunden, as Chairman of Amenities, responded that the Town Council care about the environment and consideration would be given to various initiatives supporting wildlife conservation. He concluded by thanking everyone for their donations to the NMTC Plant a Tree initiative which had seen 30 trees planted during winter.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next Annual Towns' Meeting will be held in April 2022 on a date to be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and there being no further business to discuss, closed the Meeting at 7.46pm.

Chairman _____

Date _____

Distribution:

Town Councillors

District Councillors

County Councillors

New Milton Library

Press

Alan Watson – FOCUS & NMRA

New Milton Police

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Town Council – 2020/21

Cllr Alvin Reid, Chairman / Mayor

Welcome to our 41st Annual Town's Meeting since inception of the Town Council in 1979, it should have been the 42nd, but we couldn't hold an Annual Town's Meeting last year because of something called Covid.

To remove feedback and enable everyone to hear each speaker would you please mute your microphone. If you want to ask a question, please use the notifications facility at the bottom of the screen and raise your yellow hand. You will be acknowledged in the order we see you, which may not be the order that hands are raised!

I recognise there are many people attending this meeting for the first time so a bit of context if I may. The Annual Towns Meeting is a public meeting we are required to hold every year between 1 March and 1 June. **It is in effect a local residents' meeting where any elector in the parish may speak and ask questions on matters of direct concern of your Council.** The Chair of every council committee is before you tonight and we all look forward to answering your questions later. Talking of committees, there are three main committees; Amenities who look after all the green space, Christmas lights and the like, Planning who review every planning and tree works application and make recommendations to the formal planning authorities, and finally the Finance and General committee purpose who, as well as keeping tabs on every penny spent, are responsible for everything else that doesn't sit under the other two committees.

Over the years, this Annual Town's meeting has evolved from one where the Chairman presented his Annual Report about the council into one of public recognition and awareness of local townsfolk, recognising the hard work of citizens, organisations and charities, particularly the efforts of individuals with the Award of Citizen of the Year. This year I have been in the fortunate position of recognising teams, charities and organisations who contributed to the well being of our great town.

As Chairman, my report covers the work of the Town Council in general, plus some wider reaching matters in our community. I signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office on 13 May 2019 thanking Councillors for electing me as Chairman and Mayor and the residents for voting me into office as one of your councillors for the Milton Ward.

Strange to relate that my second term of office began on 11 May 2020 with a virtual on-line Town Council meeting that should have been the Annual Council Meeting (AGM) confirming that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Committee Chairmen and membership would remain the same for the year because of Covid had prevented any meetings taking place in March and April.

At 11 May meeting, the Town Clerk referred to the Government's 50-page document: **"Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's Covid-19 recovery strategy"** We also heard about the **Coronavirus Regulations**, and in particular enabling meetings to be undertaken on-line up to 6 May 2021. The rest of the meeting was the sad fact about postponement of VE75 / VJ75 celebrations, car boot sales, and Xmas Festival.

At our 29 June meeting, an email from PC Arron Wood of the New Milton Police reported a decrease in crime in the town due to the Coronavirus restrictions. HCC Cllr

K Mans highlighted the three aims of the County Council at the beginning of the pandemic being 1) Reduce the spread of the virus 2) Work together 3) Look after each other. Cllr Mans thanked the Town Council and especially volunteer groups for their work during the pandemic and believes these aims had been met.

Cllr K Mans also reported on the number of Care Home deaths decreasing considerably. It was hoped that children would be back at school as soon as possible. HCC Cllr M Kendal reported receiving several complaints over the Efford Waste Recycling Centre concerning online bookings. It was asked that members of the public consider the amount of waste they have before making bookings. HCC Cllr F Carpenter referred to an “explosion” of digital library use across the county.

Locally, Alan Watson of the NMRA reported receiving emails on the reopening of the high-street as well as concerns as to how Lidl has been operating since the start of the pandemic. As Chairman of NMTC, I spoke to Nichola Johnston from the NFDC Environmental Health team who were already aware of the issue and was monitoring activities.

We held an Extraordinary Meeting of Town Council on 24 July to discuss local road closures that were introduced to ensure social distancing could be maintained around the town centre. As Chairman, I highlighted there were *two main things to discuss when considering the road closure options. **Public health and the financial health of our traders**, particularly in Station Road. The vast majority of our activities as a town council are centred around these two areas.*

I will ask for this Annual report to be put on the TC web site and re-iterate what was said at that meeting.

Using the government public health advice at the time we made the decision to seek approval from the Highways Authority and worked with Hampshire Highways to implement the two road closures in the town. Unlike individuals, local councils are legally bound to make the environment safe, so we YOUR COUNCIL, did what we believed was right in the circumstances based on central government guidelines.

Discussion regarding local road closures continued at our 10 August meeting, and at that meeting Dean Samber was co-opted as a Councillor for the Barton Ward, replacing Cllr Martyn Levitt who stood down at the end of June.

Council business continued, with some of the regulatory stuff around the council approval of Financial Statements and Annual Return for 2019/20 and Internal Audit Report and responses for 2019/20.

There was another Extraordinary Town Council meeting held on 24 August to discuss a remaining road closure that continued to exercise members' minds. After extensive discussion, [it was resolved to re-open the road for the benefit of local businesses.](#)

At our 5 October meeting, I mentioned the sad news of **the death of Big Issue seller, Ed Sirani, a well-liked and respected individual** who was always cheerful and polite.

The President of New Milton Lions thanked the Town Council for supporting the delivery of over 1,000 food parcels to local disadvantaged families during lockdown as part of the Lions Feed the Families campaign. This couldn't have been achieved without the excellent support from all at the New Forest Basics Bank who donated to food

To ensure the safety of all officers and members during the Pandemic the office remained at minimal manning but all officers remained accessible by email and telephone.

I also referred to the plans for commemoration on Remembrance Sunday which were being discussed in order to allow wreath-laying in compliance with Covid restrictions, and with public health & safety being of paramount importance.

At our 16 November meeting, I confirmed I laid wreaths on behalf of the Council at the War Memorial at 11:00 hrs and the Indian Memorial at Barton on Sea at 15:00hrs on the 8th and attended the War Memorial Recreation Ground at 11:00hrs on the 11 November to pay respects, all events were socially distanced and low key in nature. Councillor S Davies highlighted a recent visit by Councillors to the New Milton Sand & Ballast site at Downton on 13 October concerning its restoration, commenting it was well attended by Councillors with NMS plans for potential green space to be made accessible to the public.

Cllr Blunden referred to recent breaking of COVID-19 rules on the Skate Park. There were no further reported problems and the Youth Services Manager drew up a rota for Councillors to engage with the young people in pairs. Cllr Wallis-Dowling said that the COVID Support Group had been quieter during the second lockdown with Zoom support chats available to members of the public. I thanked the Covid support group for all their work on behalf of the Town. The Town Council Office had to remain closed due to CV regulations, but Officers remained available via email or telephone.

At our meeting on 4 January 2021, reference was still being made to Covid-19 issues. An email from Alan Watson of the Lions Club enquired 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 regrettably agreed by members that whilst it is impossible to predict, organisers should be aware that any event could be cancelled at short notice and all Council decisions will be in line with prevailing Government legislation. These matters would be regularly reviewed by Amenities. We want to get the town back up and running but we have a duty to do it in a covid safe way.

At this first meeting of 2021, I referred to budget papers for 2021-22 recently endorsed by the F&GP Committee. I would like to publicly thank all our offices and Councillors who developed the present for 2021/2022 commending them to Cllrs. 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, our commitment to improving youth services, town centre development in support of our businesses – and a need to continue to promote New Milton as a shopping destination. **Through hard work and analysis of every line item in the budget, I was pleased to present a precept to the Town Council that provided all the above without increasing the burden on you, our tax paying residents.**

At the start of our 15 February meeting, I again thanked the New Milton COVID-19 Support Group for all their good deeds and the NHS staff, doctor's surgeries, vaccination centres and volunteers for all their efforts with the mass vaccination programme. Alan Watson, representing New Milton Lions, sadly advised the meeting on the cancellation of the Lions May Fayre and the VE & VJ Community Celebration events this year due to expected COVID-19 restrictions. However, it is hoped to host the Queen's Platinum Anniversary event next year 2022.

Cllr R Murrow gave an update on the hoped-for Dementia Community Forum setting up a network for Dementia Services providers and the Dementia Community. Cllr Murrow also referred to the NM Twinning Association and expected that the French Association visit would be postponed this year, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, and hoped for it to happen next year. A commemorative tree has been planted at Ballard Lake to reflect the friendship between the towns.

Cllr A O'Sullivan advised members that Eddie Franklin of the RBL had recently passed away.

At our 29 March meeting, I was pleased to welcome Police Sergeant Kat Smith to her first Town Council meeting. Regarding ASB at the skatepark, Sergeant Smith confirmed it is part of the Police patrol whilst at the same time recognising it is a place for young people to enjoy, providing they are respectful of local residents. Cllr Clarke wished to thank Sgt Smith and her team for enforcing speeding regulations along Stem Lane. To help local shops and pubs understand the emerging regulations, Sgt Smith also informed members that the Police will be engaging in a Pub Watch and visiting licensed premises ahead of the easing of lockdown. There was a question whether CCTV at Barton Clifftop was a good idea. Sgt Smith stated CCTV prevents and detects crime and supports its use generally. She provided us with crime statistics ahead of an on-site meeting the next day with Brian Byrne, NFDC.

We received an email from NFDC confirming that virtual meetings of councils would end on 7 May and there are no Government plans to extend this emergency legislation. From the 7th, all meetings have to be held 'face to face' and our officers are working hard to ensure this is done in a Covid safe manner. Watch this space as they say!

As Mayor my chosen charity has been the **Ashley Family HUB**, a local charity which is a collaboration between Ashley Infant School, Ashley Junior School, Arnewood School and Ashley Baptist Church. With us tonight is Sarah Dibben, who leads the Group. Sarah, would you like to say a few words.

During my term of office as Mayor, I promoted **Collect Coppers for Charity** and the community of New Milton responded enthusiastically, digging out the coppers from the bottom of their sofas and emptying their penny jars. A total of £550 in coins was found and counted. What we call “spare change” is an incredible amount to the Ashley Family Hub as they continue to provide important links and services to our local families in need, signposting families in need to various appropriate agencies.

As Mayor, I was delighted to present a cheque for £1850 to Sarah, thanking them for their continued service to families in need and even more so for being there during the last few months of Covid restrictions, and months to come.

I would like to finish by giving a special mention to my Consort of the last two years, my Grandson Finley. Finley has supported me admirably wherever possible and it has been a great pleasure to work with him.

Those who know me will know I have had two main mantras during my term as your Mayor..

If you want local shops, shop locally. This is vitally important to help the town economy recover, and

If we all do a little, we can achieve a lot. Well, everyone gave a little, and it has made a big difference to the local community.

Thank you!