

ANNUAL TOWNS' MEETING - 2024/25

Annual Report of the Town Council

Cllr Alvin Reid, Chairman / Mayor

Welcome to the 45th Annual Towns' Meeting since inception of the Town Council in 1979, noting we could not hold an Annual Towns' Meeting in 2020 due to Covid.

The **Annual Towns'** Meeting is a public meeting required by statute to be held in the period between 1 March to 1 June (inclusive) each year, but it is not a Town Council meeting. It is in effect a community meeting at which any elector for the town area may speak, at the discretion of the Chairman, on matters of direct concern to the town.

Over the years, the Annual Towns' meeting has evolved from one where the Chairman presented his Annual Report about the Town Council looking backwards, into one that looks forward while recognising the hard work of both local organisations and charities. At our **Annual Meeting** on 14 May 2024, I was elected Chairman & Mayor for a year.

As Chairman, my report covers the work of the Town Council in general, plus some wider reaching matters in our community.

At our 14th May Annual Meeting (AGM), after thanking Cllr D Hawkins for the great job he had done as Mayor over the past year, I wished him well in his new role as Chairman of New Forest District Council and said one of the most important duties as Mayor is to choose a charity to support. I nominated the Men's Shed as my charity for the year and pledged to raise as much money as possible for them.

As Guest Speaker, Martin Medhurst advised that the New Milton Men's Shed had been formed at the beginning of 2019 when Cllr A Reid opened their temporary home at Fernhill Cricket Club in September of that year. The group had grown from a handful of members to around 80 at present. There were two female members, one of whom had been with them from the very start. He said that the new shed which is now almost ready could not have happened without the support of the Town Council.

At our 24th June meeting, Sgt Arron Wood provided an update in relation to crime in the town. Sgt Arron Wood advised that there had been 24 incidences of shoplifting in May, 6 of which were carried out by one female, possibly more, she has just come out of prison, the Magistrates had given her a conditional discharge in relation to these offences and told her she would be returned to prison if she committed further crimes. Shoplifting is a big problem, and shoplifters are coming from outside the town; they take it very seriously and that New Milton has the best outcome rate by prosecutions.

We received a letter from Cllr Lulu Bowerman being the Portfolio Holder for Highways at Hampshire County Council, who had replaced Cllr Nick Adams-King since he became Leader of Hampshire County Council. The letter advised of Carriageway Surface Repairs to the whole length of Station Road. The letter arrived in response to one sent by the Town Clerk to Cllr Nick Adams-King on behalf of the Town Mayor.

We also received a letter from Sammy Miller, being a local resident regarding the recent roadworks at Bashley Cross Road which resulted in the road being closed for four days in May and eight days in June, being somewhat of a prelude to further works.

At our 5th August meeting, we heard from Southern Gas Network (SGN) about proposed gas main replacement along Bashley Common Road, as below:

“Due to ongoing leakage, SGN need to replace the section of gas main between the cattle grid (near Rising Sun pub end) to approximately the junction of Ossemsley South Drive. This work needs to be completed before the winter months when the pressure for gas increases.”

Option 1 – a full road closure with a duration of 8 to 10 weeks

Option 2 – traffic lights with an approximate duration of 16 weeks

The Town Clerk advised this matter had been discussed at short notice under correspondence at the Executive Committee meeting held on 19 July 2024. After further discussion on Option 2 was deemed the best option and this was communicated to HCC and SGN.

Cllr Fran Carpenter advised that Cllr Keith Mans, Chairman of HCC, is the County Council member for Bashley and that any approach to the County Council regarding Bashley Common Road should be copied to him. Fran advised that there was nothing specific to report from HCC, but that Nick Adams-King, new Leader of HCC, is focussing once again on devolution. At that time, her view was that things were likely to remain the same.

Cllr Fran Carpenter advised that Children’s Services had received an “outstanding” rating from Ofsted, and that this is the second time in a row. There were many summer activities across Hampshire for parents, children, and grandchildren, including HAF activities in New Milton. Cllr Carpenter advised she had been very pleased to provide grants to New Milton Dementia Allotment and the Ashley Youth Hub recently.

Cllr Carpenter has a new role as Vice-Chair of the Fire Service and has seen a huge amount of good work from the Prince’s Trust and has been attending Passing out Parades, saying it had been inspiring. In response to a question from Cllr John Adams, Cllr Carpenter stated that the Fire Service and the Police Service have been asked to share facilities, and Donna Jones is keen on this from a police perspective, noting there is no plan to amalgamate them.

At our 30th September meeting, following the sad passing of Cllr Keith Craze, NFDC advised that elections for a Town and District Councillor for Barton on Sea and Becton Ward would take place on 24 October 2024.

We heard further from Susan Day of SGN in relation to repairs to the gas pipe in Bashley, advising HCC refused their permit to start work in late October as there were other significant utilities works in the wider areas which will impact on potential diversions. The permit request would be re-submitted in January.

HCC Cllr Mel Kendal reported on news from HCC. He said that the County Council was still not clear on the difficult decisions it would be called to make, but there would be large budget cuts to meet the deficit. He said that one area which has been reduced is road maintenance. However, he was pleased to advise that the cancellation of HS2 had freed up some extra Govt money and that Hampshire would be receiving around £14.2 million extra in the next financial year, and the year thereafter. This amounts to a swing of £8 million more for road repairs overall, taking the cuts and the extra money into account. This is good news, but there is an issue around having sufficient personnel to deal with the roads but hope this is addressed.

Cllr Wyn Davies asked if Cllr Kendal had seen the approach that Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Council were taking to potholes, enabling the public to report them direct to contractors. Cllr Kendal liked this idea and said he would look into it as it sounded sensible.

Cllr Kendal also advised he has been pushing for a restriction on motorised caravans parking on Barton seafront overnight. But restricting overnight parking entailed a start and end time, which would need to be checked. At present, this would require a member of staff patrolling at the cut off times, and between to ensure the rules were being followed, but there was not the manpower to deal with it. An alternative perhaps is that an ANPR camera could be used.

Cllr Geoff Blunden gave an update on the District Council plans for a new waste collection service, being introduced in 3 phases, noting New Milton and Lymington would be first. The new service will include new food waste collections, wheelie bins for recycling and rubbish collections. Food waste will be collected every week, and recycling and rubbish will be collected on alternate weeks. He said this is great news for the local area as it will prevent the bird strikes which have been troubling residents for a while. Waste collection is the front face of the work done at NFDC and we will do all we can to get the message across in stages.

Finally, Cllr Blunden said two green routes have recently been opened at Carrick Wood and Ashington Park. Being delighted with the scheme, the footpaths are greatly improved and there are also seats for people to admire the views. This is excellent for wellbeing in general.

At our 11th November meeting, The Chairman said the Remembrance Parade and Service had gone well and he was delighted that it had been joined by a veteran of D-Day Rifleman Jim Justice. He asked the Town Clerk to recount what he had said about Jim at the War Memorial. The Town Clerk read from the Welcome speech delivered at the War Memorial.

“Today, we welcome 99-year-old D-Day veteran Jim Justice, a Green Jacket who lives locally. Rifleman Jim Justice landed in Normandy, his platoon then marched to liberate Bayeux, encountering resistance and hand-to-hand combat. This year, Jim visited commemorative events in Normandy with the RBL and had tea with the Royal Family.”

In the Democratic Half Hour at the end of the meeting, a New Milton resident thanked the Council for all the work done on the Recreation Ground in advance of Remembrance Sunday, being particularly impressed with the cleaning of the War Memorial itself, and nearby traffic sign. The Chairman echoed the resident's thanks and said that would be passed onto the Estates Team.

The resident expressed dismay at the vandalism of the public toilets on the Recreation Ground. The Chairman advised that the toilets are the responsibility of NFDC and that there are discussions with them about installing additional CCTV to cover them in order to prevent further vandalism, with placement of an extra camera opposite.

The resident also asked about the works at Ballard Lake, is there a photograph of what it will look like, is it value for money, what is to be done with all the mud?

The Chairman asked that a link to the proposal for Ballard Lake or picture be appended to the minutes of this meeting. He stated that excess silt is being used to re-profile the lake and will all remain on site.

Confirming the works represent good value for money, the Town Clerk advised it will not cost local taxpayers of New Milton anything as the whole project is being funded by other means. (£20k from NFDC CIL Fund, £40K S.106 Drainage Monies, £100k NFDC Mitigation Funds)

At our 6th January 2025 meeting, the Chairman advised that he had been busy for the last couple of months and took the opportunity to thank Councillors for their support in particular at the Mayor's Carol Service which most had attended. He advised further that the sum of £388 had been raised at the Carol Service for the Men's Shed. He also advised that the Men's Shed are always looking for new members and that they hold monthly open days with the next one on 7th February 2025.

Cllr Steve Davies advised that he and Cllr S Clarke had visited the NFDC housing development at Moore Close and looked at two properties, one which is social housing and the other shared ownership. They have been finished to a very high standard and some social renters are already in occupation. Cllr S Davies mentioned that there will be 20 more dwellings in the New Forest shortly, referring to a new development at Hythe, and another at Fordingbridge.

Cllr Steve Davies regularly attends housing hubs across the district including regular meetings at the Nedderman Centre with one of the NFDC Support Officers. Whenever he attends that, he also sees the foodbank in operation and is always impressed with *the amount and quality of the food provided by voluntary workers*.

Cllr Steve Clarke spoke of his visit to Moore Close with Cllr S Davies having met one of the new residents who is disabled and was occupying one of the new flats. The surfaces in the kitchen can change height to suit whoever is using them. The properties are of a very high standard and new residents were very pleased with them.

The Chairman referred to the Recommendation from the F&GP Meeting on 10 December 2024 relating to the budget and precept for 2025/26. The Chairman suggested this matter be deferred pending further discussions.

The press representative asked when he would hear about the budget and precept which were due to be discussed at this meeting, but which had been deferred. He was keen to know when these items would be published.

The Chairman advised that once the budget had been approved and the precept agreed the figure would appear in the minutes of the council.

At our meeting held on 17 February 2024, Acting Sgt Leigh Brown currently covering New Milton and Lymington, stated the crime of shoplifting continues to be a big issue in the town, but that 73.3% of shoplifting cases have resulted in a formal outcome, this is largely thanks to PC Tom Jelly who focuses on shoplifting.

He is keen to engage with local residents at police beat surgeries, but the last meeting at the Arnewood School had not attracted any attendance by residents, apart from Mayor! Acting Sgt Brown was keen to hear any ideas which might help encourage a dialogue with the residents.

Cllr Geoff Blunden asked about ASB across the town, stating that the public conveniences had recently been targeted with some ASB on the recreation ground over the weekend. Sgt Brown advised that they are arranging extra patrols around the toilets and that he is chasing Brian Byrne at NFDC for additional CCTV which has been promised for some time.

Cllr Steve Clarke asked about the shoplifting, noting a national press report that 1 in 4 people going through self-checkouts put fewer items through than they take or scan cheaper items in lieu of more expensive ones, he wondered if the stores themselves are doing enough. Sgt Brown said he would still regard this as theft, and that at the Ringwood and Lymington branches of Waitrose they had been employing more security, and this had resulted in less theft.

Cllr Kani Trehorn asked how the police would engage the public more effectively, and about how long he would be at New Milton. Sgt Brown said that he had been in talks with the school to have the next beat surgery when the school was open for parents' evening in the hope that this would attract a bigger audience. He's not sure how long he would be New Milton based.

Cllr David Hawkins asked about the prospect of the police having a desk on reception in the Town Hall so that residents could come to speak to them in person. Cllr J Baker asked why Lymington has a reception desk and New Milton does not when New Milton has a larger population. Sgt Brown advised that they have been reconfiguring their office here which will allow members of the public to come in and talk to police officers. He had not been a party to discussions about a front desk, but Inspector Ord had.

Cllr Valya Schooling asked if there are insufficient police based at New Milton. Sgt Brown said he would always like more, but he did not feel able to answer that question, again he would refer it to the Inspector for his views.

Post Meeting Note: Messages from Inspector Darren Ord, New Forest West Neighbourhood

Front Counter – I know you are aware of the issues we have encountered with red tape and costing for us to be able to use the front counter – we are currently looking at a work around with the re-configuring of our own office space so that we have a room members of the public will be able to access from the main council lobby – this will not be staffed every day, but will be a space where we can hold regular beat surgeries and allow us to deal with public enquiries face to face.

Staffing at New Milton – Police Staffing numbers are currently slightly reduced as Sgt Arron Woods is working in Southampton; however, Leigh is covering Lymington and New Milton so supervisory cover is not adversely affected. I am however looking to get a Sergeant in post ASAP to give support to Leigh and the local team. When I look at numbers of crimes per officer, I am happy to say that New Milton is staffed in line with demand and other comparable areas. We also have some excellent PCSO support in Al and Rosie who pick up a great deal of the community engagement work.

The Chairman referred to the Precept Request for 2025-26 as previously circulated.

Ahead of devolution and local government reorganisation, and taking account of everything, including inflation, the recent changes in the NI rates and the level at which they now kick in, Cllr Reid said the increase of 19.6p per week on a Band D property appeared entirely reasonable and affordable. Following a unanimous vote, it was

RESOLVED:

That next year's Budget of £1,450,227 as endorsed by F&GP on 10 December 2024 and the revised Precept for 2025-26 of £1,450,227 be approved.

At our last meeting on 31 March 2025, following the re-opening of Barton Common Road, we heard 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 down in the dip on the border of Hampshire and Dorset.

We also heard 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 to do 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.

Cllr Steve 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 John 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 involvement of the Planning Committee who will only deal with more significant planning issues. Forestry England will be bringing in parking charges from next year.

Cllr Steve Clarke advised that the Town Development Manager had put in a lot of time and effort to ensure that the public engagement on the NP review was worthwhile and effective. He thanked her and the Cllrs 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.

In conclusion, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to be Mayor and Chairman of this Council, and I would like to thank my Councillor colleagues and staff for all their hard work and support throughout the past year. I look forward to working with you all again.

Cllr R A Reid

7 May 2025

ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2024-25

Amenities Report - Cllr G R Blunden

On 14 May 2024, I was re-elected as Chairman of the Amenities Committee, and Cllr Madalaine Craze was re-elected as Vice Chair.

On 28 May 2024, we held our first meeting of the new civic year, and I reminded the Committee and members of the public of the purpose of Public Participation:

“Members of the public may speak on any item(s) appearing on the public agenda, or on any other matter that falls within the Committee’s terms of reference” noting they should only speak for 3 minutes each and not repeat what someone else has already said.

At the start of each year, I like to remind members of Amenities’ Terms of Reference:

Promote leisure activities and facilities which shall include maintenance of public recreation grounds, parks, sports fields, open spaces, allotment sites, flower/shrub beds, bus shelters and similar areas which are the responsibility of the Council.

As appropriate, monitor, liaise, advise and where necessary arrange activities or functions connected with powers relating to entertainment, the arts, welfare services, public library, and tourism. This shall include recommendations for financial assistance.

Decision to allow or refuse events on the War Memorial Recreation Ground in Whitefield Road (specifically) is delegated to the Amenities Chairman (or Vice) and the Town Clerk (or Assistant) if there is no meeting in a reasonable timescale.

Monitor the provision and maintenance of all outdoor recreational sports and similar amenity services in the town area and make recommendations on these aspects as appropriate, to the Council or other responsible authority.

Be responsible for the provision of street markets and all aspects associated with it, together with Car Boot sales.

Be responsible for the provision and/or maintenance of public seats, litter bins and footpaths which are the recognised responsibility of the Council.

I then updated members in relation to the **Indoor Bowling Club**. Their building on the Recreation Ground is 75 years old is not insulated but is past its sell by date. The long term-plan is to get rid of it. Colin Stokes as Chairman of the Indoor Bowls Club had recently written in with a proposal for the Indoor Bowls club to relocate out of the town and suggested they could be relocated to Fernhill Sports Ground where they could share facilities with the **Cricket Club**.

The Town Clerk then advised that he is currently in dialogue with the Cricket Club about a new lease and had pointed out to our solicitor that the vision plan for Fernhill Sports Ground was always that it should accommodate other sports. The demised premises consists solely of “the practice net area, the clubroom, kitchen, bar, bar store and part of the adjacent storage building”.

The rest of the facilities are available to the cricket club on a non-exclusive or shared basis. As Indoor Bowls is played mainly in the winter months and cricket in the summer these sports complement each other and make for better use of facilities.

Cllr D Hawkins asked if a new building would be needed for the Indoor Bowls. The Chairman confirmed it would, and it makes sense to share existing changing facilities and toilets at Fernhill Sports Ground. The size of a new building would depend on the number of members which in turn determines the number of rinks needed. He invited members to join a new Working Party to give consideration to the **Fernhill Sports Ground Vision Plan** and work towards this end. Cllr Bob Murrow stated that he supports the sharing of the facilities and volunteered to be on the Working Party.

Jill Colclough from NFDC spoke about the project at **Carrick Wood** as it is now known. She advised that the new name had been suggested by the contractor and makes more sense, rather than Carrick Way Woodland. The contractors are due to remobilise very shortly, with work due to be completed by the middle or the end of July.

At our meeting on 9 July 2024, we received a presentation from NFDC colleagues Byron McGrail, Kevin Frenchum and Iain Park that provided an overview of district-wide grounds maintenance and litter challenges around the district. We also received updates on the following projects.

Fernhill Sports Ground Vision Plan and Indoor Bowling Club Relocation: Progress has been made with regards to the formation of the working party. The following have expressed interest and put themselves forward to participate in the working party, The Chairman, Town Clerk, Cllr B Murrow, Cllr S Clarke, M Jeffries, Jamie Burton of NFDC and Kevin Smith of New Milton Bowls Club.

Carrick Wood: It was reported the contractor had now demobilised, and care of the site is now under the control of NMTC. Additionally, a member of the public had generously offered their volunteer services for helping with the maintenance of the area. The Town Clerk duly signed the Memorandum of Understanding with NFDC.

Ashley Parade: The Chairman expressed gratitude towards the Estates & Facilities team for their hard work on this project, acknowledging the numerous challenges that arose during its execution. Members expressed their delight with the final outcome, noting the significant improvement it brings to the Shopping Parade. The revitalised area will be officially opened on 20th July 2024 at 12 Noon, after the official opening of the Ashley Youth Facility and Play area from 11am.

Ashley Youth Facility: The Chairman advised that the official opening of the Ashley Youth Facility will take place on 20th July 2024 from 10:30am with the ribbon cutting at 11am. This will be an opportunity to formally open the new facility at Ashley Recreation Ground and the Play Park. It was agreed to host HAF activities there noting **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)** Programme is a Department for Education (DfE) funded programme of activities for children and young people during school holidays.

Ballard Lake Enhancements: A letter from NFDC relating to CIL Award towards the Ballard Lake Improvements referred to £20k CIL, but NMTC will actually be in receipt of £60k out of a total sum of £160k that NFDC had earmarked in different guises. The Estates Manager advised that improvements at Ballard Lake would start on 22 July.

At the meeting on 2 September 2024, the Chairman addressed the sudden passing of **Councillor Keith Craze**, expressing sadness at his loss and sending condolences to his family. A minute's silence was then held as a mark of respect.

Station's Master's House - Mandy Hayes, representing the Friends at Ballard Water Meadow & Friends of New Milton Station provided an update. The Steering Committee had met with the Hampshire Community Rail Partnership (HCRP) and their architect on 28th August. The HCRP believe the New Milton project was still viable and are supportive. Mandy Hayes noted that the HCRP could be willing to take on the lease, reducing the Town Council's involvement with the project; Mandy recommended that the steering group remain in place until further details are available to assess who might be best placed to work on the project. Regarding the Station Masters House, the Chairman expressed gratitude for the useful update, and members showed enthusiasm for the project, noting the future need for funding and public support

Friends of New Milton Station (FNMS) held their first work party on 10th September. Along with the New Milton Heritage Society, they will take over the planters with a design scheme titled '*Betwixt the Forest and the Sea*'. The FNMS requested the Town Council's continued support in watering the planters and removing any large amounts of green waste. The Town Council will continue to assist with watering and green waste clearance at New Milton Station.

It was revealed that New Milton Station has been nominated for the **Stations in Bloom** award. Representatives were very impressed with the flowers and condition of the station. The award ceremony will be held on 16th October in Sherborne. Mandy Hayes, representing the Friends of New Milton Station, and Rob Stevens, the Estates & Facilities Supervisor for New Milton Town Council, will attend the ceremony.

New Forest LCWIP

The Chairman expressed support for the New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) but noted safety considerations were the responsibility of Hampshire County Council and individual cyclists, not New Milton Town Council. The Town Clerk added that the Town Council cannot do much on its own without support from HCC, NFNPA, Forestry England, NFDC (LCWIP Partners).

Councillor O'Sullivan suggested supporting the plan without authorising it. Councillor Clarke pointed out that the tube map design was confusing. Councillor Rice-Mundy raised concerns about the safety of routes where cars park on the side of the road and questioned how Hampshire County Council intends to keep these routes safe.

Earlier in the week, two local residents had expressed their gratitude to the council for assisting efforts with the **Lions Club Town Show** and the Groovemeister musical performance held at the Recreation Ground. They commended the well-maintained grounds, the organisation of the events, and mentioned that they had a great time.

The Chairman said the final **Sunday Music on the Rec** event of the season had been a great success with hundreds of attendees enjoying the music performance by "Groovemeister". He reflected on the popularity of the Performance Pavilion and community events since its construction 12 years ago, and extended gratitude to New Milton Town Council staff for their efforts in making these events possible.

At our 15 October 2024 meeting members received updates on Stations in Bloom: New Milton Station was awarded a **Silver Gilt at the Stations in Bloom** awards ceremony held at Castle Gardens, Sherborne on the 16 October 2024. It was a joint effort between the Friends of New Milton Station and Town Council. The judging and awards were in recognition of staff and volunteers nurturing stations across the network organised by Stations in Bloom supported by South-Western Railway (SWR).

Members also heard that next year was **Railway 200**, and the Friends of New Milton Station are planning joint projects with the New Milton Historical Society and participating in the national celebration of 200 years of railways in the UK. Ideas include a mural, and joint events. The Chairman said the Town Council will do what it can to support such joint projects.

Cllr Hawkins inquired about status of the **Station Master's building**. Cllr O'Sullivan responded that Mandy's group has been in communication with a railway trust currently renovating Romsey station with a £1.2m project. The trust is keen to help and contribute to New Milton station. The viability of the building will be investigated, with most of the work led by the Friends of New Milton Station. The Chairman suggested the Town Council might consider providing a small amount of seed funding.

NEW FOREST CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP)

Members agreed the following response to the HCC consultation about the LCWIP.

That NMTC are concerned about the use of direct routes, which tend to be busiest therefore less safe, and the higher costs associated. We support the alternative routes offered by Transition Lymington (Route 3, 5a, 10 and 11) and these are supported in our upcoming Neighbourhood Plan. These quieter routes will encourage novices more readily, and the lesser cost will deliver a whole rather than partial network; and That reopening the public debate around the Station Road/Whitefield/ Osborne Road junction is surprising, after years of NMTC being told that all solutions had been investigated and there was insufficient evidence to change the junction.

Ashley Family HUB - The Chairman referred to Sessions for Young Families and expressed his appreciation for the increased use of the Ashley Family HUB. The Town Clerk referred to the Youth Services Report highlighting Youth Hubs' schedule of activities starting in November, providing a safe space for families with young children to participate in activities, receive advice, and learn about available services. Cllr Hawkins was pleased the council is continuing what the school started and emphasised that mums need all the support they can get. He thanked the Town Council and the Youth Services Manager for their efforts in maintaining the initiative.

Grazing Licences - The Chairman announced Dexters are now back at Ballard Water Meadow. The ponies at Barton Common were taken off due to fencing issues, but the fencing is due to be upgraded on 4th November. This upgrade, the biggest in 12 years, will include work on the gates and fencing near the golf area. There is also a long-term ambition to introduce cattle grazing on Barton Common, with a grazier in line already.

The Chairman reminded everyone about the relaunch of the **Plant A Tree** Initiative - and noted that National Tree Week is approaching, from 23 Nov to 1 Dec 2024 and suggested it would be a nice idea for some members to consider sponsoring a tree.

At our meeting on 25 November 2024, Brenda Talbot, a local resident spoke about the concrete tennis tables at the War Memorial Recreation Ground, noting their success and frequent use by the community. She mentioned that by the end of 2024, the special matting had started lifting and became soggy. After discussing the issue with the Estates & Facilities Manager, it was agreed that remedial works would be undertaken in the new financial year (2024/25). The Chairman explained that work has taken longer than expected but assured those present that these tasks would be addressed during the scheduled **resurfacing works at the Recreation Ground**.

The Town Clerk referred to an email received from Jamie Burton, NFDC Health & Partnerships Manager, regarding a proposed **Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)** and outdoor sports facility strategy as below:

“NFDC and New Forest National Park Authority have appointed FMG Consulting to develop a supply and demand assessment for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities locally.

A central part of the Strategy is to develop evidence about the needs and opportunities to develop indoor and outdoor sports facilities. The two authorities want to ensure these facilities provide the maximum access and opportunities for residents to participate and develop a long-term Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies for the New Forest district.

This work will help to better understand the current supply of facilities locally and what may be required to meet future demand, it will also help to safeguard existing sites. It's important to consult with organisations that provide these types of facilities locally, to understand more about how they are used and any aspirations to enhance them or provide new facilities.”

Jamie Burton did ask for the strategy to include bowls and therefore there is a good opportunity to feed back the situation with (proposed) **indoor bowls facility** in our town. This should be seen as a subregional offer [ie. not having indoor bowls in every town but that this new one could serve a number of New Forest areas locally]. This may support funding from other developments (subject to the findings of the PPS).

AMENITIES COMMITTEE BUDGET 2025/26

The Chairman referred to Committee Budgets for 2025-26 and the Town Clerk went through the proposed Amenities Budget for 2025-2026 page by page explaining the implications of recent Govt changes to Employers' National Insurance contributions, increase in Estates staffing and reduced use of contractors and it was agreed that the Amenities Budget for 2025/2026 in the sum of £834.5k be endorsed by Finance & General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2024.

Community Garden - The Chairman referred to the previously circulated New Milton Community Garden Newsletter, which provided an update on the garden. Members were interested to receive this update, and noted Julia Stamper had stepped down as Chair in October. Members asked the Town Clerk to write and thank Julia Stamper.

Plant a Tree - The Chairman referred to the previously circulated report on the Plant a Tree Initiative, explaining 14 trees had been purchased by residents so far this year, with more expected in the coming weeks. Since the initiative started, a total of 87 trees.

As part of upcoming National Tree Week, 3 trees were planted on the Recreation Ground on Thursday, 28 November. Two of these commemorating VE & VJ 80th Days.

As part of the Carrick Wood Green Way Mitigation scheme the Estates team will plant 8 new trees and over 500 whips this season. Additionally, over 5,000 bulbs will be planted in Carrick Wood, fully funded by NFDC as part of the main mitigation project.

At our meeting on 20 January 2025, in the absence of the Chairman, who sent his apologies, the Vice Chair presided over the meeting.

Bob Lord, the NMTC Volunteer Ranger for Barton Common addressed concerns about the introduction of **Dexter Cattle on Barton Common**, expressing his full support for their re-introduction. Mr Lord explained that since Dexters were introduced to Ballard Water Meadow in 2014, there had been no recorded incidents and noted that the breed is known for being tame.

A member of the public, who submitted an enquiry via Facebook spoke about the introduction of cattle at Barton Common and expressed concerns regarding safety and suggested the presence of the cattle might deter people from visiting the Common. The local resident also queried what plans were in place to address potential incidents.

Cllr Clarke supported the introduction of cattle to Barton Common, noting that similar concerns were raised when they were introduced to Ballard Water Meadow. However, since their introduction in 2014, there had been no significant incidents. He also clarified that the cattle being introduced are Dexters, known for their tame nature, and that no young calves will be present.

Cllr Hawkins also supported the introduction, commenting that humans and animals should co-exist and reminding dog owners to be responsible while walking their dogs. The Town Clerk advised he would reply to the resident in writing. Following correspondence with Sam Loades of New Forest Land Advice Service, the Town Clerk circulated copies of his advice to members that was duly noted.

Moore Close - The Chair referred to the allocation of CIL monies received from NFDC in October towards a new footpath at Moore Close, connecting with the Community Garden. The Town Clerk highlighted the need to confirm that previous CIL monies have been spent or allocated before making new CIL bids through NFDC.

Community Garden

The Chair referred to a request for permission from New Milton Community Garden to erect a shed and noticeboard at the Community Garden, with all work to be funded from their charitable donations. The Town Clerk ran through the requests, and a discussion followed regarding metal or wooden shed.

Cllr Clarke suggested that, for added security, a container like the one at Ballard Water Meadow might be a better option, although concerns were raised about its potential appearance. The Estates Manager agreed, stating that the only issue would be the visual impact. Cllr Hawkins emphasised that whatever is built must be sympathetic to its location, and that efforts should be made to soften its appearance, painting it green.

Ballard Lake Improvements

The Town Clerk referred to an email from a resident asking about the start date for the phase 2 works at Ballard Lake. In response, Jill Colclough of NFDC informed him that the expected start date is mid-March. The Estates Manager added that phase one of the works is complete, with only some remedial tasks and general tidying left.

New Milton Town Council will collaborate with New Forest District Council on phase two, which will include improvements to walkways, new seating, and new metal railings along Lake Grove Road. Phase two is expected to be completed by the end of April.

At our meeting on 3 March 2025, the Town Clerk referred an email from SGN below:
“We are pleased to advise the gas main replacement work on Bashley Common Road is now complete and the road will be officially back open to through traffic by 3pm, Friday 28 February. We’d like to thank the community for their support, patience and understanding.”

The Town Clerk also referred to an email received from South-Western Railway below:
“Railway 200 “special exhibition train will be touring the country this year and next year, as part of the 200th anniversary of the modern railway (Railway200). The Train will be visiting London Waterloo on 18th and 19th July, and the Bluebell Railway in Sussex from 23rd to 29th July 2025.”

The Chairman referred to notes of a **Local Nature Reserve** Working Party meeting held on 17th February 2025. The meeting was held to gather information and discuss the proposal for designating Local Nature Reserve status, with a focus on Ballard Water Meadow. The Chairman invited comments that could be taken back to the working group. Cllr K Trehorn suggested that the Town Council upload videos showcasing the meadow onto the council’s website to help raise awareness.

Cllr D Hawkins praised the volunteers for their hard work, noting that they had done a superb job in maintaining the area. However, he questioned what tangible benefits the designation would bring, whether it would make a real difference, and acknowledged that there would be associated costs. He did, however, agree that more promotion of the meadow was needed.

Cllrs J M Baker, D A Rice-Mundy, and V E Schooling spoke in support of designating Ballard Water Meadow as a Local Nature Reserve. They highlighted that it would be a valuable asset to the town, enhance its image, and encourage greater respect for the area. They also felt that the designation would attract more visitors, as people tend to recognise and appreciate the significance of a Nature Reserve. All three councillors also expressed their gratitude to the volunteers for their outstanding contributions.

The Chairman referred to the notes of the Working Party meeting and emphasised that no decisions regarding Nature Reserves were being made at this meeting. The purpose was to update members and allow for comments, assuring attendees that differing views on the matter were understood. The Chairman acknowledged the significant number of hours contributed by volunteers, highlighting how they work.

Grazing - The Chairman informed members that there are currently three ponies on the common, with a fourth due any day, but no cattle at present. A meeting will be held in September to discuss grazing arrangements for Ballard Water Meadow and Barton Common, with a particular focus on cattle options for Barton Common. Plans are in place to reintroduce cattle in the autumn/winter, and various grazing options are being considered, including alternatives to Dexter cattle.

Ballard Lake Improvements - The Chairman informed members that Phase 2 of the Ballard Lake Enhancements, being headed up by NFDC, will be starting mid-March and will include improvements to walkways, seating, and railings. The timescale provided for this is 12 - 14 weeks.

Cricket Club Lease - The Town Clerk updated members on the progress of the lease, explaining that correspondence was ongoing with the Cricket Club’s solicitor clarifying the rent would be reviewed every three years. After discussion, it was recommended:
That the matter be endorsed by F&GP on 17 March for Town Council approval.

The final Amenities Committee meeting of the 2024-25 year took place on 7 April 2025
Friends of New Milton Station (FNMS) Mandy Hayes & Julia Stamper gave a presentation on the No.1 Project, concerning the future of the Station Master's House.

Mandy outlined the history of the project, originally led by the Town Council in 2018, which stalled in 2021 due to structural concerns. Network Rail had reportedly invested around £100,000 in the property prior to this. FNMS have since revived the project with the aim of bringing the building into community use. A public consultation will help determine the final use of the building.

FNMS see their role as facilitators, bringing together partners rather than determining the final use. Flexibility is key to attracting funding. A fundraising campaign to raise £40,000 in seed funding will launch on 18 April 2025, covering surveys, legal and lease costs, planning, and consultation. The project will be managed by the Hampshire Community Rail Partnership (HCRP), a Community Interest Company with experience restoring disused station buildings. They are currently working on Romsey Station House and received national recognition in 2023.

Julia added that raising the £40,000 would demonstrate community commitment and strengthen future grant applications, including to the Railway Heritage Trust. The Chairman acknowledged the Council's past involvement and expressed confidence in the renewed approach. He proposed that a financial contribution of £10,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy allocation be made to demonstrate the Town Council's commitment to the initiative and support the community fundraising campaign. It was

RECOMMENDED: That a financial contribution of £10,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation be approved by the Finance & General Purposes Committee, in support of the No.1 Project.

Community Infrastructure Levy bids. Out of five bids submitted to NFDC, 3 were recently recommended by NFDC Cabinet, with a combined total of £113,550. It was also noted that the Friendly Dog Club is in line to be awarded £75,000 in CIL funding for a replacement building, which is situated on land at Long Meadow that is leased from the Town Council. This was a separate and independently submitted bid.

Ballard Lake Enhancements - Jill Colclough of New Forest District Council (NFDC) provided an update on Phase 2 of the on-going enhancement works, confirming that the project remains on schedule and contractors are now in their fifth week on site.

Footpath installation continues, largely following desire lines and using hoggin or SMA surfaces. Several previously planted trees have been replanted due to being in the way of the new path route. Drainage improvements are also underway, including covering of an exposed surface drain that previously posed both a trip hazard and a visual obstruction along with installation of underground drainage beneath new paths.

A planned section of no-dig tarmac path on the eastern side of the site will instead be constructed using hoggin, due to tree root constraints and low overhead clearance that would pose a safety risk if the path were raised. The Chairman welcomed the practical approach taken to preserve trees and members noted the positive improvements to the site.

I would like to thank everyone involved in providing these amenities, maintaining and improving them and actively promoting our town through our partner organisations.

ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2024-25

F&GP REPORT – Cllr D N TUNGATE

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has overall control of Council finance and personnel functions and makes the final recommendation regarding the annual precept. It also has a role in considering and evaluating reports from our Internal / External Auditors.

Budget discussions began on 1 November 2024 and the 2025-26 Budget was recommended by F&GP on 10 December 2024 in the sum of £1,450,227. This was subsequently agreed, and a **Precept** of the same amount was approved by Town Council on 17 February 2025, and New Milton's proportion of Band D council tax increased by 20p per week to £135.02 pa which compares favourably to other local councils in the New Forest district.

F&GP follows a strict **Work Plan**, ensuring financial performance is continually reviewed and monitored in a timely way by Accountants, Internal and External Auditors. Reports are submitted and considered by members at regular 6-weekly intervals to ensure the Town Council remains within budget and complies with accounting conventions.

F&GP also has a remit for overseeing **Youth Work** in the town receiving regular reports from our Youth Services Manager (YSM) about working directly with young people in partnership with existing Youth Workers at the newly-opened Ashley Family HUB that provided support for local families with sessions on Monday and Tuesday afternoons covering Breast feeding group (through Health Service and Breastfeeding Network); Healthy Hampshire Families (through Barnardo's); Baby Group (through Health Service); Toddler Group; SEN support. With funding through HCC / Local Children's Partnership (LCP) we now have HAF (Holiday Activities & Food). This allows under-privileged children to access HAF locally during school holidays where they are provided with healthy meals, and sporting and craft activities.

The Town Council uses a **Local Council Risk Assessment** (LCRS) software program to help identify, assess and mitigate risks. The program covers over 50 risk areas from allotments to websites identifying 400 potential risks facing councils. Some risks such as cemeteries/ conveniences do not apply to New Milton, but potential risks were identified under 25 main headings. Annually, an Action Plan is drawn up detailing potential risks and F&GP on 28 April 2025 recommended the Council adopt the Risk Assessments for 2025-2026.

Administration of **Grant Aid** is also the responsibility of this Committee and this financial year grants amounting to **£4,500** were provided to local good causes. There were also three **Youth Grants** awarded amounting to **£14,500**. New Milton Youth Trust (NMYT) has taken over much detached youth work on the War Memorial Recreation Ground. The Lions Club were separately granted **£3,500** for two events (Town Show and VE Day) from the **Community Events** budget and **CAB** were awarded **£5,000**. **Total grants of £27,500** this year (2023-2024: £27,100).

F&GP oversees **Reserves, Community Infrastructure Levy & Developers' Contributions** to help fund Capital Expenditure (CAPEX). At our F&GP meeting on 22 April 2024, NFDC confirmed £20k CIL Funding towards **Ballard Lake improvements**. This £160k project was fully funded by NFDC with £20k CIL, £40k s.106 monies, £100k NFDC Recreational Mitigation. This project is now nearing completion, at no cost to the local taxpayer, per the attached report.

The Official Opening of **Ashley HUB, Play Park & Shopping Parade** took place on 20 July. This was funded from various sources including s.106 Developers' Contributions of £265k, CIL of £80k and £60k Reserves. Ashley Shopping Parade improvements were jointly funded from £15k Government Levelling-up grant and £15k from our own CIL monies. **Total £435k**.

As noted above, the F&GP remit is both wide and varied. Half-way through this Administration, I would like to thank all my Cllr colleagues and members of staff for their valuable contributions.



ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2025

Planning Committee – Cllr S J Clarke

This Committee has delegated power from Town Council to give comment on all types of application for developments and works to protected trees. This influences the decision-making bodies New Forest District Council and the National Park Authority ahead of their determination. The Committee also has remit over consultations regarding planning policy, issues of highways, utilities and other major infrastructure. It usually meets in the Town Hall on alternate Thursday evenings but occasionally moves to a Tuesday.

	2023-24	2024-25
N.F.D.C Planning	165	146
National Park Planning	16	12
Trees	52	61

The following applications remained dominant for this year –

- Land of Ashley Manor Farm – Gravel extraction application NF176, was agreed by Hampshire County Council in November 2024 despite continued objection from nearby residents.
- Land east of Brockhills Lane - The strategic site for 164 dwellings (Application 21/11179) was agreed and work started on site in early April 2025, again with continued objection from those living nearby.

Further controversial subjects were also dealt with by the Committee –

- The sudden closure of KFC at 59 Station Road, one of the towns most prominent sites. This followed a concerning non-protected tree removal just a few months before. There are residential properties above now, with no news on what company may utilise the ground floor.
- Barton-on-Sea Pay and Display Scheme – So far there have been two versions of what the scheme might entail, and this has been the subject of much consternation. Many residents plus Town Council and other organisations have spoken strongly against the schemes for a variety of reasons. There is a further consultation due.

Both local planning authorities for the area, New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority have recently consulted on their Issues and Scoping documents for their upcoming Local Plan reviews.

New Milton's Neighbourhood Plan was a leader of its kind when first established and is currently under review, with the first informal consultation having taken place in March 2025. The consultation responses are currently being formulated and draft adjusted, in readiness for the next round of formal consultation in June (Regulation 14).

I thank my fellow Committee members and officers Theresa Elliott, Joy Bean and Chiara Rabbito for their continued hard work and determination.