

Appendix 1

My Ref: JD/Ctax/Precept Letter  
Your Ref:

20 November 2025

Dear Clerk to Parish/Town Clerk

## 2026/2027 PRECEPTING ARRANGEMENTS

I attach a precept claim form for the financial year 2026/27. I require you to complete and return the form by 15 January 2026.

In exceptional circumstances, this can be sent later, subject to (your council) approval, but any final updated form must be received by the 30<sup>th</sup> January. If no follow up form is submitted in that window, we will take your previously advised figures as final. No changes advised after the 30<sup>th</sup> January will be actioned in the council tax setting report.

The form includes the provisional tax base figure for 2026/27. It includes the number of properties that are subject to the 100% second home premium. When setting the tax base for the 2025/26 financial year the number of properties subject to a second home was an estimate. As we are now using actual figures for 2026/27, this may result in an increase in the tax base where the number of properties is more than the previous year's estimate.

The tax base figure has still to be considered by the Council's Cabinet on 3 December 2025 but has been provided now to assist your budget preparation process. We will only contact you again if Cabinet do not approve the tax base figure currently quoted. Your tax base figure for 2025/26 is also included on the form.

Parishes precepting over £100,000 are required to provide additional information for inclusion in the Council Tax leaflet. Gross and net expenditure for 2025/26 and 2026/27 are required, analysed over specific classes of service (these are shown in Table B overleaf). If this information is not available by 15 January, please do not delay your precept request. Please make sure that your precept request form is **signed and dated**.

I propose to pay one half of the precept and one half of the Discretionary Grant on 30 April 2026 and the remainder on 30 September 2026. In order to check that my records are up to date, I have attached a note of the address and bank account to which payments will be sent. Please let me know if any of these details are incorrect.

If I can be of any further help, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Julie Dunsdon  
Corporate Accountant

Tel: 023 8028 5004  
Email: [julie.dunsdon@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:julie.dunsdon@nfdc.gov.uk)

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**PRECEPT REQUEST FOR NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**PRECEPT 2026/27**

Please complete the highlighted cells in table A and B (if appropriate), and return the form **SIGNED and DATED** to Julie Dunsdon in Accountancy, not later than the 15 January 2026.

**TABLE A: Amount required by Town / Parish Council in 2026/27 (to the nearest £).**

	Council Tax Requirement (Note 1)	Tax Base	Council Tax Per Band D (Note 2)
2025/26	£ 1,450,227	Properties 10,741.00	£ 135.02
2026/27	<del>1,631,666</del>	10,825.80	150.72
<b>Variation (Increase + / Decrease -)</b>	<b>181,439</b>	<b>84.80</b>	<b>15.70</b>

<b>Signed:</b>	_____
<b>Dated:</b>	_____

**Notes:**

1. This is the total amount you will receive from the Council, in two instalments.
2. Once you have completed the highlighted cell, your Band D Council Tax level for 2026/27 will be shown in the last column.

**PRECEPT REQUEST FOR NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**PRECEPT 2026/27**

**TABLE B: Analysis of Income and Expenditure - For completion by Authorities precepting over £100,000 only.**

2025/26				2026/27		
Gross Expend £	Income £	Net Expend £		Gross Expend £	Income £	Net Expend £
		0	Planning & Economic Development			0
766,219	-95,268	670,951	Recreation & Tourism	801,425	-88,084	713,341
0		0	Housing			0
791,376	-12,100	779,276	Other Services	930,425	-12,100	918,325
		0	Contribution to Funds			0
		0	Transfers from/to balances			0
1,557,595	-107,368	1,450,227	Council Tax Requirement (Precept)	1,731,850	-100,184	1,631,666
		0				0



AUDITING SOLUTIONS LTD

Appendix 2

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## **New Milton Town Council**

*Internal Audit Report 2025 (interim review)*

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*Claire Lingard  
Consultant Auditor*

*For and on behalf of  
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

## **Background**

Statute requires all town and parish councils to arrange for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Return.

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the Internal Audit process for the 2025-26 financial year: The Interim review took place on the 05<sup>th</sup> and 06<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

## **Internal Audit Approach**

In commencing our review for the year, we have again had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential misrecording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts contained within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Our programme of cover is designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council has appropriate and robust financial systems in place that operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Internal Audit Report' as part of the Council's AGAR process, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

## **Overall Conclusions**

We have followed up the suggestions and formal recommendations made in our FY2024-25 reports and acknowledge that the members have noted and considered these in their deliberations and have implemented these as appropriate. The Council has continued to make significant business processes and performance improvements once again in relation to Risk Management & Mitigation.

We have noted that the Council has noted and implemented the recommendations for improvement made as a result of the interim and year-end reviews conducted during the 2024-25 financial year, our record of the completed Action Plan for the 2024-25 financial year audit which are detailed in the appended Action Plan.

We report that, on the basis of the work undertaken during the 2025-26 financial year to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025, the Council continues to operate robust and effective internal controls in all but one of the areas examined to date. Resultantly, no recommendations for improvement have been made.

The Clerk & RFO and his team are again to be complimented on the exemplary performance of New Milton Town Council both in terms of its public facing services and its corporate governance and administration.

Once again, we commend the Clerk & RFO, Assistant Clerk and their team for their continued professional management and administration of the Council's finance, governance and delivery functions. As in previous years, the requested audit files and associated documentation were presented for audit in a professional manner by the Clerk & RFO and the Assistant Clerk, making this in-person review a relatively straightforward process.

We ask that Members consider the content of this report and acknowledge that the report has been formally reviewed and adopted by Council.

# Detailed Report

## Review of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

Our objective here is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers.

The Council uses the Omega accounting software to maintain its accounting records, which also provides the basis for preparation of the year-end Statement of Accounts and Annual Return.

The Council maintains the public funds under its management in three National Westminster Bank accounts, A Quilter Cheviot Investment Account and a Churches, Councils and Local Authorities Public Sector Deposit Fund (CCLA PSDF).

The services of the external contract accountants (DCKs) are employed to maintain the day-to-day accounting records and prepare the year-end detailed Statement of Accounts / Annual Return data.

We have to date: -

- Verified that an appropriate cost centre and nominal ledger structure remains in place for 2025-26;
- Agreed the opening Trial Balance in the Omega accounting software for 2025-26 financial year to the to the closing Trial Balance for the 2024-25 financial year;
- Checked and agreed three sample months' receipts and payments transactions (April, June and September 2025) from all NatWest accounts, including the daily "sweep" transfers, to the relevant Omega cash books;
- Noted that the Council continues to maintain a diverse portfolio of investments, to ensure as far as it is possible to do so, that the council's funds are protected whilst generating a reasonable rate of return;
- Noted the contents of the latest Quilter Cheviot investment report covering the period to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025;
- Noted that the Council continues to maintain a CCLA PSDF account with the intention of transferring the half-year Precept payment directly into this account. The Account balance as at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September stood at £250,000 (£250,000 as at the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025); and,
- Checked and verified all the Rialtas bank reconciliations, for all the Council's bank and investment accounts for the period of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025 to ensure that there are no long-standing, uncleared items or other another anomalous entries arising.

### Conclusion

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective is to ensure that the Council has robust corporate governance documentation and processes in place, and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings) all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted

Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation. We have: -

- Noted that the Council received a Qualified Audit Certificate from the External Auditors on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2025;
- Reviewed the Full Council and Standing Committee minutes (except Planning) for the financial year to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 to ensure that no issues affecting the Council's financial stability either in the short, medium or long term exist;
- Noted that the Council last reviewed and re-adopted its revised combined Standing Orders and Financial Regulations at the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2025 meeting of the Full Town Council (revision number 19) under Minute reference 42;
- Noted that the Council confirmed its continued eligibility to adopt the General Power of Competence for the 2025-26 financial year, and readopted this during the Annual Meeting of the Town Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2025, under Minute reference 7;
- Noted that the Council's official website, hosted on a secure server at: <https://www.newmiltontowncouncil.gov.uk/> (which, as far as can be ascertained, is fully compliant with the prevailing Accessibility legislation and is very easy for visitors to use and readily access information);
- Noted that the Council correctly provided the opportunity for the Exercise of Public Rights: The Announcement was dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2025, for a period of exactly 30 working days, including the first 10 working days in July, from Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2025 to the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2025 inclusive;
- Noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the 2024-25 financial year was published from the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 for a period of three months as Resolved at the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 meeting of the Full Council under Minute reference 59;
- Noted that the Council continues to operate a robust Risk Management Strategy. There is clear evidence of Member scrutiny of Risk at the Full Council and its Standing Committees; and,
- Noted that the Clerk & RFO and Assistant Clerk continue to take all reasonable steps to ensure the Council's immediate and ongoing compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This includes, but is not limited to, arranging secure off-site cloud backup facilities, the ongoing development of new Information & Data Protection and Privacy policies, the provision of dedicated Council e-mail addresses for all council members and administration staff, and the amendment of forms and e-mails to ensure users of the council's services are aware of what data will be retained and the Council's Privacy Policy.

We have commenced the formal review of the Minutes of the Full Council and all its standing committees (with the exception of the Planning Committee which is beyond the remit of the Internal Audit process) for the 2025-26 financial year to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025. It is our opinion that the standard of the Agenda and recorded Minutes of New Milton Town Council continues to be exemplary.

There is clear evidence that the health and well-being of the New Milton Town Council constituents continues to be at the heart of its Neighbourhood Plan, with the Council's youth

services widely regarded to be amongst the best available in the New Forest. Additionally, the play and recreation areas in the Council's control provide sports and leisure facilities for all age groups within the town. All these facilities have been subject to regular risk review.

The Council continues to support several initiatives promoting local business and shopping areas, including award winning spring and summer floral displays and the Christmas Lights. Additionally, the Council continues to manage the "Go New Milton" website which promotes local shops and businesses.

In relation to the Council's forward planning, we note that the Clerk & RFO and Members have made all reasonable and proportionate efforts to implement the recommendations made in our prior year reports.

### **Conclusion**

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Review of Expenditure**

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Council resources are released in accordance with the Council's approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- An official order has been raised for all purchases and service delivery where one would be expected;
- All discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We have commenced our examination of payments for the 2025-26 financial year for compliance with the above criteria, selecting a sample of 58 payment documents during the 2025-26 financial year. The interim sample comprised of all non-payroll related payments individually above £3,000, together with every 30<sup>th</sup> cashbook transaction (irrespective of value). A total of 58 payments were checked and verified with a total value of £305,999.86 and equating to approximately 57% of all non-pay related expenditure processed to the above date with no matters arising.

We note that there has not been the requirement to go out to Competitive Tender during the 2025-26 financial year to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025.

Finally, in this area of our review, we have checked and verified the first two quarterly VAT reclaim claims for the 2025-26 financial year, ensuring that these were correctly submitted in accord with the Omega control record and properly disclosed in the year-end accounting statements, with no issues arising.



## **Conclusion**

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Review of Assessment and Management of Risk**

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition. Consequently, we:

- Noted that the Council's insurance cover continues to be provided by Zurich under a 'Select for Local Councils Policy' on a long term agreement to reduce costs.

The current year's policy schedule running to 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026 is as follows:

**Policy number: YLL-272009-6773**

**Term of cover: 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2025 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026**

### ***Key features***

- Public Liability £15M
- Employers Liability £10M
- Fidelity Guarantee £2M
- Hirers' Liability £2M
- Personal Accident £2M per incident / £500k per person
- Plant Protection £500K
- Libel & Slander £250K
- Legal Expenses £200k
- Motor vehicles £100k
- Business Interruption £65,858

We consider the above appropriate for the Council's immediate requirements.

- Noted that the Council's Risk Management Strategy remains robust with a dynamic approach to Risk Management with Risk Registers reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and governed by an umbrella Health & Safety policy;
- Noted the Council's Risk Strategy, with the Council's Risk Registers endorsed for the 2025-26 financial year during the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 meeting of the Amenities Committee under Minute reference 118. The Risk Strategy and Registers were further endorsed during the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2025 under Minute reference 130 with the recommendation that these be Adopted and Approved at Full Council. We note that this action has not yet been taken;
- Reviewed the Council's arrangements for the regular inspection of playgrounds and recreational areas, noting that Vitaplay now inspects the playgrounds and recreational areas on a fortnightly basis, making recommendations for replacement, repair and general maintenance. Additionally, the Council's play areas, MUGA and skatepark are visually inspected weekly by members of the Estates Team who have been trained and are qualified to carry out weekly visual inspections. These inspections are recorded, and hard copies kept on file and also electronically stored in their own folder on the Town Council shared drive.

Any minor repairs required as a result of inspections are carried out by the Council's nominated and certified sub-contractor 'Vitaplay'. Any equipment or area deemed to be in need of a major repair and/or presents a potential health and safety risk is taken out of service immediately until a full repair can be undertaken.

All play areas, the MUGA and Skatepark are fully inspected annually, usually during July, by the Play Inspection Company.

Finally, in this area of our review and as an adjunct to the above, we have noted that the Town Council now organises and holds Play Inspector Courses carried out by qualified instructors. These courses are open to employees of other government and not for profit entities. To date, New Milton Town Council has hosted course delegates from organisations including New Forest District Council, Lymington, Pennington Town Council, Horsham Town Council, Warminster Town Council, and the Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton.

This training process continues to enable New Milton Town Council to train members of the Estates Team at net neutral cost, as the course fees have been offset by the income received from running the course, which is a benefit both to the Council and its Constituents and is, in this auditor's opinion, an exemplary initiative.

### **Conclusions**

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation. We remind the Clerk & RFO and Council Member of the need to Readopt the Councils Governance of Risk Policy and Risk Assessments at Full Council.*

## **Review of Budgetary Control & Reserves**

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and level of precept to be drawn down from New Forest District Council; also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise. We have:

- Noted that the Council's actual expenditure to the 30th September 2025 is broadly in line with its budgetary projections for the financial year;
- We note that members continue to be provided with detail of the current budgetary performance at the monthly meetings of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- Noted that, as in previous years, the Council was engaged in a detailed, Budget setting and Precept determination process as at the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2025. A pre-agreed schedule of planning and review meetings were scheduled to take place during October, November and December 2025; and,
- As at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 the Council held twelve properly constituted earmarked reserves with -£57,570.51 net in year transfers to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025.

### **Conclusion**

*There are no matters arising in this area review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## Review of Income

In considering the Council's income streams, we aim to ensure that robust systems are in place to ensure the identification of all income due to the Council from its various sources, to ensure that the invoice is submitted in a timely manner and that effective procedures are in place to pursue recovery of any outstanding monies due to the Council. We note that, in addition to the Precept, the Council continues to receive income from a variety of sources including sports field hire, allotment rents, property leases, market stall rents, investment interest, recovered VAT, sundry wayleaves, sponsorship, grants and CIL monies.

We have:

- Noted that in addition to the annual Precept, the Council achieves significant income from the following sources:
  - ✓ **Sports field hire (Leases):** Cricket Club Lease, Rugby Club Lease, Bowls Club Lease, Indoor Bowls Club Lease, Football Club Lease, Tennis Club lease
  - ✓ **CIL monies:** CIL monies are received on a quarterly basis.
  - ✓ **Allotments:** Invoiced in August each year.
  - ✓ **Market stall rents:** Where cash is received this is banking using a separate paying-in record which records all income for the stalls received on a particular day.
  - ✓ **Interest:** Interest is paid directly to the corresponding bank account and recorded accurately in the appropriate cashbook.
  - ✓ **Sundry Income:** Grants, sponsorship, sundry services: bus shelter advertising, container rentals etc.,
- Noted that the Council undertook a formal review of its fees and charges during the prior-year budget setting process, with increases approved accordingly for the 2025-26 financial year;
- The Fees & Charges for the 2025-26 financial year are detailed in a 'standalone' booklet which was approved by the Council. The Fees & Charges are also freely available, published on the Council's official website at [Copy-of-New-Website-Fees-Charges-Page-2025-2026.pdf](#);
- The Fees & Charges for the 2026-27 financial year are currently under review during the Budget setting and Precept determination process for the 2026-27 financial year;
- Checked and verified all receipts recorded in the Sales Daybooks and Cashbook 1 to the corresponding Bank Statements for the financial year from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2025 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 noting that there is no significant Aged Debt;
- We have reviewed all invoices and receipts pertaining to Sales Receipts as entered on Cashbook 1, for the financial year from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2025 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025, ensuring that the fees charged were in accord with the published scales with no undue delays identified in settlement by customers;

- Reviewed 100% of all the Allotment invoices issued in the 2025-26 financial year to the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2024; and,
- We have reviewed the way in which cash and cheque receipts are recorded for banking for the financial year to 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 with no matters arising.

### **Conclusions**

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Review of Petty Cash Accounts**

The Council operates a limited petty cash account, topped up “as and when” with periodic cash (ATM) re-imbursements (generally of £250 each). The Derek Kemp Accountancy Solution (DCKAS) contractor maintains appropriate Excel based control sheets to analyse the expenditure for posting to Omega.

We have checked and agreed three sample month’s transactions, April, June and August 2025, to ensure that each payment was supported by relevant supplier invoices / till receipts and that the expenditure was appropriate for the Council’s activities with no issues arising. To this end, we have checked and verified the DCK produced and approved Petty Cash reconciliation reports, which have been endorsed in the Management Accounts by the F&GP Committee, and which have been certified by the Clerk & RFO.

We have checked and verified the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2025 Petty Cash reconciliation, in the amount of £235.88, which has been certified by the Clerk & RFO (*as we were not onsite on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2025*).

### **Conclusions**

*There are no matters arising in this area of our review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

## **Review of Salaries**

In examining the Council’s payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the LGPS (further revised with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 as regards employee contribution percentage bandings).

The Council continues to outsource the production of its monthly payroll to its contractor accountants: we have examined the monthly payroll for the year to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 including payroll payments to councillors in relation to their emolument payments, the grounds and office staff. We have: -

- Noted that the Council’s payroll function continues to be outsourced to DCK Accounting Solutions (DCKAS);
- Ensured that the Council has approved employee pay rates for the Financial Year, ensuring that these were correctly applied;

- Noted that each Council employee has received written confirmation of their FY2025-26 pay rate, SCP point and salary, whenever a pay review has been Approved and Adopted;
- Reviewed the Council's Staff Establishment list;
- Checked and verified the payroll to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025;
- Ensured that appropriate PAYE tax codes are being applied to both employees and members' allowances and that PAYE deductions were computed accurately based on the current 'tables';
- Ensured that NI deductions were computed accurately based on the current 'tables';
- Ensured that the correct percentage superannuation deductions, based on the revised LGPS, are being applied where appropriate;
- Checked and verified that net salary payments have been made to staff appropriately and been recorded accurately in the accounting records, noting that all salary and members' allowance payments continue to be made by BACS; and,
- Checked and verified that appropriate and accurate reporting has been made to HMRC on a timely basis.

### **Conclusions**

*There are no matters arising in this area of our review warranting formal comment or recommendation. We shall extend this area of review during the year-end audit to conduct a detailed analysis of the December 2025 Payroll.*

## **Review of Investments and Loans**

We have noted that the Council continues to maintain a detailed Investment Strategy and policy which was last reviewed during the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2025 meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, under Minute reference 30.

Account	Cashbook Number	Reconciled balance as at 30.09.25
Current Account	CB1	£2,500.00
First Reserve Account 1	CB2	£49,490.64
Business Reserve Account 2	CB3	£17,566.54
Special Interest Bearing Account 3	CB5	£819,401.90
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>£888,959.08</b>
Petty cash balance 30.09.25	N/A	£235.88
<b>Total Cash at bank &amp; in hand at 30.09.25</b>		<b>£889,194.96</b>

As at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 the Council held funds, totalling £889,194.96 as indicated in the table above. The detail of each account has been checked and verified against the prime documentation, i.e. bank statements as at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, corresponding cashbook entries and bank reconciliations.

The Council's share portfolio investment with Quilter Cheviot as of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September held a total market value of £343,620.00. Again, we have noted that Quilter Cheviot continues to utilise Investment Income in addition to sale proceeds to purchase further investments.

We have further Noted that the Council maintains a CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) account, and that the funds balance as at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025 stood at £250,000 with dividends being paid directly into the Council's current account. We note that the CCLA continues to outperform the majority of investments open to councils.

We are advised by the Clerk & RFO that the level of the Council's banked funds and its investments are regularly reviewed at the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Clerk & RFO has certified that the Council has no loans repayable, either by or to it, as at the 30th of September 2025.

### ***Conclusion***

*There are no matters arising in this area of review warranting formal comment or recommendation.*

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### **NOTE TO REPORT**

*We confirm that all confidential & sensitive information, supplied for the purposes of this audit including, Personnel Minutes, Payroll and Employment data have been permanently deleted from Auditing Solutions Ltd.'s servers and any printouts made for the purposes of this audit have been destroyed in accordance with the Company's data and document retention policies and with the prevailing General Data Protection Legislation.*

## **F&GP Committee Meeting**

**28.04.25**

### **RISK ASSESSMENTS 2025-26**

The Town Council uses an updated version of Local Council Risk Assessment (LCRS) software program that was originally installed to help identify and address nearly 400 potential risks.

The program now covers 50 risk areas from allotments to websites identifying 397 potential risks facing local councils. Some risk areas such as beach huts, car parks, cemeteries, conveniences and libraries do not apply to New Milton (yet). For 2025-26, in respect of this council, a total of 45 risk areas and 333 potential risks were identified.

This latest Risk Assessment review was undertaken by the Town Clerk/ Estates Manager. The likelihood of each risk arising and the impact on the Council were considered in turn. If the likelihood was low it scored 1 medium 2, high 3. If the impact was low it scored 1, medium 2, high 3.

By way of exception reporting, some risk areas are highlighted below:

1. Allotments – Covering inspection of 5 allotment sites & over 100 plots.
2. Bus Shelters – Complete replacement programme nearing completion.
3. Car Parks – Reduce fly-tipping / ensure safety NMTC gravel car parks.
4. Commons – Ensure safe grazing, maintaining security of open access.
5. Flooding – Minimise risk, work with Environment Agency NFDC / HCC.
6. Staffing – Ensure sufficient / appropriate staff attendance, as required.
7. Investments – Ensure integrity, after dynamic White House policy shift.
8. Recs – Reporting ASB / vandalism via New Forest Safety Partnership.
9. MUGA /Play areas – Ensure adequate security measures are in place.
10. Play Areas – Ensure adequate and regular inspections are carried out.
11. Skatepark – A Multi-agency approach / CCTV to tackle ASB problems.
12. CCTV – Ensure increased and sufficient surveillance of new cameras.
13. Insurance – Ensure all assets, and potential risks adequately covered.
14. Youth Club – Ensure continuation of weekly youth service on the Rec.
15. Succession Planning – Plan implementation for key members of staff.
16. Town Development Manager – Admin of Neighbourhood Plan Review.
17. Youth Services Manager – Remit includes running Ashley Youth Club.
18. Public Events - Continue to support community events where possible.
19. Local Govt Reorganisation – Prepare for changes / increased staffing.
20. Transfer of Assets – Ensure relevant budgets are in place prior to LGR.
21. Upgrading of Assets – Ongoing maintenance, buildings and equipment.
22. Town Hall – Ensure adequate facilities identified /provided in the future.
23. Local Councils – Plan /consider work arrangements with other councils.
24. District Council – Agree which assets to be transferred to local councils
25. County Council – Agree working arrangements with new unitary council

### **RECOMMENDED:**

**That F&GP endorses Risk Assessments listed for 2025-2026.**

## Appendix 4

### NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

#### 1 Introduction

1.1 This document forms part of the Council's Risk Management Strategy. It sets out:

- What is risk management?
- Why does the Council need a risk management strategy?
- What is the Council's philosophy on risk management?
- What is the risk management process?
- How will risk management feed into the Council's existing policies?
- Implementation timetable
- Roles and responsibilities
- Future monitoring
- LGR implications

1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Further develop risk management and raise its profile across the Council.
- Integrate risk management into the culture of the organisation.
- Embed risk management through the ownership and management of risk as part of all decision-making processes.
- Manage risk in accordance with best practice.

#### 2 What is Risk Management?

2.1 Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and to successfully execute its strategies. Risk management is the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled.

2.2 Risk management is an essential feature of good governance. An organisation that manages risk well is more likely to achieve its objectives. It is vital to recognise that risk management is not simply about health and safety, or risk assessments, but applies to all aspects of the Council's work, including public safety.

2.3 Risks can be classified into various types; but it is important to recognise that for all categories the direct financial losses may have less impact than the indirect costs such as disruption of normal working. The examples below are not exhaustive:

**Strategic Risk** - Long-term adverse impacts from poor decision-making or from poor implementation. Risks damage to the reputation of the Council and loss of public confidence, especially in regard to providing additional services following LGR.

**Compliance Risk** - Failure to comply with legislation, laid down procedures or the lack of documentation to prove compliance. Such risks potentially expose the council to prosecution, judicial review, employment tribunals and the inability to enforce contracts.



## Appendix 4

**Financial Risk** - Fraud, waste, excess demand for services, bad debts. Risk of additional audit investigation, objection to accounts, reduced service delivery, dramatically increased Precept levels/impact on Council reserves following LGR.

**Operating Risk** - Failure to deliver (any new) services effectively; malfunctioning equipment, hazards to service users, the general public or staff, damage to property. Risk of insurance claims; higher insurance premiums; lengthy recovery processes.

- 2.4 Not all these risks are insurable and for some the premiums may not be cost effective. Even where insurance is available, a monetary consideration might not be an adequate recompense. The emphasis should always be on eliminating or reducing risk before costly steps to transfer risk to another party are considered.
- 2.5 Risk is not restricted to potential threats but can be connected with opportunities. Good risk management can facilitate proactive, rather than merely defensive responses. Measures to manage adverse risks are likely to help with managing positive ones.

### 3 **Why does the Council need a Risk Management Strategy?**

- 3.1 Risk management strengthens the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and enhance the value of services provided.
- 3.2 The Risk Management Strategy helps to ensure that the Council has an understanding of risk, and that the Council adopts a uniform approach to identifying and prioritising risks. This should in turn lead to conscious choices as to the most appropriate method of dealing with each risk, be it elimination, reduction, transfer or acceptance of some risk.
- 3.3 Strategic risk management is also an integral part of the audit process and as such is an important element in demonstrating continuous service improvement.
- 3.4 There is a requirement under the Accounts & Audit Regulations to establish and maintain a systematic strategy, framework and process for managing risk.

### 4. **Risk Management Policy Statement**

New Milton Town Council recognises that it has responsibility to manage risks effectively in order to protect its employees, assets, liabilities and community against potential losses, to minimise uncertainty in achieving its goals and objectives and to maximise the opportunities to achieve its vision.

The Council accepts that some risks can never be fully eliminated, and it has in place a strategy that provides a structured, systematic and focussed approach to managing risk.

Risk management is an integral part of the Council's management processes and duties.

### 5. **Implementing the Strategy**

**Risk Identification** – Identifying and understanding hazards and risks facing the Council is crucial if informed decisions are to be made about policies or service delivery methods. The risks associated with these decisions can then be effectively managed. All risks are identified and recorded in the Council's Risk Register that is updated every year.

## Appendix 4

**Risk Analysis** – Once risks are identified they need to be systematically and accurately assessed using proven techniques. Analysis should make full use of any available data on the potential frequency of events and their consequences. If a risk is seen to be unacceptable, then steps need to be taken to control or respond to the risk.

**Risk Prioritisation** - An assessment is undertaken of the impact and likelihood of risks occurring with impact and likelihood scored. Action Plans are prepared to address any risks with a residual risk or where risk impact is judged to be major. Residual risks will be subject to monitoring and action will be taken to reduce residual risk in all cases.

### 5.1 Risk Control

Risk control is the process of taking action to minimise the likelihood of the risk event occurring and/or reducing the severity of the consequences should it occur. Typically, risk control requires the identification / implementation of revised operating procedures, but in exceptional cases more drastic action will be required to reduce the risk to an acceptable level, particularly any new service provisions following LGR.

Options for control include:

**Elimination** – Circumstances from which the risk arises are removed so that the risk no longer exists.

**Reduction** – Control measures are implemented to reduce the impact/ likelihood of the risk occurring.

**Transfer** – Financial impact is passed to others eg by revising contractual terms.

**Sharing** - Risk is shared with another party.

**Insuring** - Insure against some or all of a risk to mitigate financial impact where possible.

**Acceptance** – Documenting decisions after assessment of areas where the Council accepts or tolerates risk to a certain extent.

### 5.2 Risk Monitoring

The Risk Management process does not finish with putting any risk control procedures in place. Their effectiveness in controlling risk must be monitored and reviewed. It is also important to assess whether the nature of any risk has changed over time.

The information generated from applying the risk management process will help to ensure that risks can be avoided or minimised in the future. It will also inform judgements on the nature and extent of insurance cover and the balance to be reached between self-insurance and external protection.

## 6 How will Risk Management feed into the Council's existing policies?

6.1 The initial identification of risks is achieved by compiling a list of the risks integrated into a comprehensive risk register, that is reviewed annually by F&GP and Internal Audit.

6.2 **Projects and Service Changes** – Projects or changes to services will include risks identification and measures to eliminate or control risks will be documented in agenda reports and briefing papers to be considered by the Council and its committees.

## Appendix 4

- 6.3 **Partnership Working** – The Council will continue to enter into a number of partnerships with organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors where necessary. Part of the process of setting up future partnerships will be to ensure that all relevant risks are identified, and appropriate control mechanisms are built into the management arrangements for partnership working. It is now a safeguarding prerequisite that at least two officers and two Councillors attend all external / partnership meetings, especially those regarding the transfer of any new service provision from HCC / NFDC.

### 7. **Implementation Timetable**

The Town Clerk and F&GP Committee examine the Council Risk Management Strategy and Risk Management Policy Statement annually identifying current risks in detail.

- Risk Management Strategy – originally adopted by Council on 3 January 2012.
- Risk Assessments and action plans are agreed by F&GP annually in April.
- Risk Management Strategy is reviewed by F&GP Committee annually in July.

### 8 **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 8.1 Risk management has become embedded into the everyday culture and performance management process of the Council. The roles and responsibilities set out below, are designed to ensure that risk is managed effectively right across the Council and its operations, and responsibility for risk is located in the right place. The process is driven from the top but must also involve Council staff.

- 8.2 **Elected Members** – Risk management is a key part of Elected Member's role with an expectation that Elected Members will lead and monitor the approach adopted, including:

- (a) Approval of the Risk Management Strategy
- (b) Analysis of key risks in reports on major projects, ensuring that all future projects and services undertaken are adequately risk managed
- (c) Approval of year-end Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
- (d) Assessment of risks whilst setting the budget, including any bids for resources to tackle specific issues.

- 8.3 **Employees** – Undertake their duties within risk management guidelines ensuring that their skills and knowledge are used effectively. All employees maintain an awareness of the impact and costs of risks and how to feed data into the formal process. They work to control risks or threats within their jobs, monitor progress and report on job-related risks.

- 8.4 **Town Clerk** – Acts as the Lead Officer on Risk Management and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Risk Management Strategy. The Town Clerk:

- (a) provides advice as to the legality of policy and service delivery choices
- (b) provides advice on the implications for service areas of the Council's aims / objectives
- (c) updates the Council on the implications of new or revised legislation
- (d) assists in handling any litigation claims
- (e) provides advice on human resource issues and cases of work-related illness or injury
- (e) advises on health and safety implications of service delivery methods
- (f) reports progress to Council via F&GP

## Appendix 4

### 8.5 **Responsible Finance Officer** – as the Council's RFO, the Town Clerk:

- (a) assesses and implements the Council's insurance requirements
- (b) assesses the financial implications of strategic policy options
- (c) provides assistance and advice on budgetary planning and control
- (d) ensures that the financial information system allows effective budgetary control
- (e) manages the Council's investments as part of the Investments Working Party

### 8.6 **Role of Internal Audit**

Internal Audit provides an important scrutiny role by carrying out audits to provide independent assurance to the Council that all necessary risk management systems are in situ and significant business risks are managed effectively.

Internal Audit assists the Council in identifying both its financial and operational risks and seeks to assist the Council in developing and implementing proper arrangements to manage them, including adequate and effective systems of internal control to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of errors or fraud, and now looks at wider operational aspects.

Internal Audit reports to full Town Council and may make appropriate recommendations.

### 8.7 **Scrutiny Committee** – Review and future development of the Risk Management Policy and Strategy and review of the Risk Register is overseen by the F&GP Committee.

### 8.8 **Training** – Where possible Risk Management training is provided to Members and staff through a variety of mediums, the aim being to ensure both Members and staff have the skills necessary to identify, evaluate and control risks associated with Council services.

### 8.9 **Reporting** - In addition to the roles and responsibilities set out above, the Council is keen to promote an environment within which individuals and groups are encouraged to report adverse incidents promptly and openly.

## 9 **Monitoring**

### 9.1 **Review of Risk Management Strategy**

This Strategy is regularly considered as part of the Council's on-going review of its policy documents, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Recommendations are reported to the Council.

### 9.2

But it is crucial that information is regularly reviewed and updated. As noted last year, new risks emerged and needed to be controlled. Feedback from Internal and External Audit can identify areas for improvement, as can the sharing of best practice via professional bodies, such as the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and other relevant local council forums, including the New Forest Association of Local Councils (NFALC) and South-East Employers (SEE) all of which we are members of.

### 9.3 **Reporting on Progress**

The Town Clerk provides an annual review and assessment of risks in April each year.

## Appendix 4

### 10 Conclusion

The adoption of a sound risk management approach achieves many benefits for the Council. It assists in demonstrating that the Council is committed to continuous service improvement and effective corporate governance updating risk assessments as required.

### 11 Freedom of Information

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and GDPR legislation, this document will be posted on the Council's Website [www.newmiltontowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.newmiltontowncouncil.gov.uk) and copies of this document, and the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) is available for inspection at the Council Offices.

## TYPES OF RISK AND IMPACTS

MAJOR	SUBSTANTIAL
<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death or life-changing injuries</li> <li>• Medium term loss of service and / or operational capability</li> <li>• Adverse national publicity</li> <li>• More than 10 people involved</li> <li>• Litigation almost certain and difficult to defend successfully</li> <li>• Financial loss in excess of £250,000</li> <li>• Breaches of law punishable by imprisonment</li> <li>• Corporate Manslaughter</li> <li>• Corporate Governance failure</li> <li>• LGR – Insufficient Budget provision</li> </ul>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive, permanent injuries, long term sickness</li> <li>• Short term loss of service and / or operational capability</li> <li>• Adverse local publicity</li> <li>• Up to 10 people involved</li> <li>• Litigation to be expected</li> <li>• Financial loss between £100,000 and £250,000</li> <li>• Breaches of the law punishable by fines</li> <li>• GDPR breaches / loss of data</li> <li>• Disaster Recovery failure</li> <li>• LGR – Inability to provide new services</li> </ul>
MODERATE	MINOR
<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical treatment required / long-term injury sustained to staff or public</li> <li>• Short term disruption to service and / or operational capability</li> <li>• Needs careful public relations</li> <li>• No more than 5 people involved</li> <li>• High potential for complaint locally, lower-level litigation possible</li> <li>• Financial loss greater than 10% and between £25,000 and £100,000</li> <li>• Breaches of regulations / standards</li> <li>• Higher Risk Investment of £250,000</li> <li>• LGR – Increase in Service Provision</li> </ul>	<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No injuries beyond first aid level to staff</li> <li>• No significant disruption to service and / or operational capability</li> <li>• Unlikely to cause any adverse publicity</li> <li>• No more than 2 people involved</li> <li>• Unlikely to cause complaint / litigation</li> <li>• Financial loss below £25,000</li> <li>• Breaches of local procedures</li> <li>• Breaches of local standards</li> <li>• Breaches of accepted protocol</li> <li>• Minor misdemeanours</li> <li>• Financial loss less than 10%</li> <li>• LGR – Staff morale from changes</li> </ul>

From Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration...

*"Legislation has committed much work and many duties to an unspecified proper officer of a council. In other types of authority there will be several departmental heads who are proper officers for the purposes of their respective departments. In a local council the proper officer will usually be the clerk."*

*To ensure that outside bodies and other authorities are in no doubt, a local council may be wise to make a standing order in the following or equivalent form confirming that the Clerk is the proper officer for any purpose in respect of which a proper officer is mentioned in any statute."*

### **STANDING ORDER 17**

#### **TOWN CLERK - PROPER OFFICER AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

The Clerk acts as Chief Executive Officer and in a town may be called a Town Clerk. A local council has the power to appoint officers as necessary [LGA 1972, s112 (1)] and must ensure one of its officers is responsible for its financial affairs [LGA 1972, s 151].

The Town Clerk acts as ***Proper Officer of the Council*** for any purpose in respect of which a proper officer is mentioned in any legal statute, regulation, order or otherwise required, and as ***Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)*** in regard to financial affairs.

As ***Proper Officer***, the Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring the Council acts within the law. For the promotion and protection of the interests of the inhabitants, the Town Council may prosecute or defend legal proceedings and take or defend proceedings with the object of defending its constitution, property, rights or reputation.

It is the Town Clerk's duty to attend meetings of the Council, ensuring minutes are taken and maintained, signing certain notices, issuing summonses to attend meetings and preparing agendas. As ***RFO***, the Town Clerk is also responsible for maintaining accounting records and reporting on financial matters.



### The role of Town Clerk

Over the years, from 2022 - 2025 especially, NALC has reduced reference to the title of Town Clerk, while separating the roles of Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer.

Existing S/O 16 xvi should be included under a new S/O 17 as below, noting initials RFO stand for Responsible Financial Officer, not Responsible Finance Officer as shown at 17 b currently.

Attempts to separate the duties of Town Clerk and RFO may suit some councils, like Hythe / Ringwood, but the Town Clerk should be able to discuss and explain finance matters with members.

I am putting the proposal overleaf forward for inclusion in the next Standing Orders / Fin Regs review.

Graham Flexman  
Town Clerk/RFO  
Proper Officer

**AI says:** Town Clerk is the chief executive and head administrator for a local council, responsible for its smooth operation, ensuring legal compliance, managing staff, handling finances (as Responsible Financial Officer), implementing council decisions, and serving as a key link between the council, public, and media, essentially ensuring the machinery of local government runs effectively and transparently.

#### Key Responsibilities:

- **Administration & Leadership:** Acts as Chief Executive, managing council staff and overseeing all administrative functions.
- **Legal & Governance:** Ensures the council operates legally, serves as the "Proper Officer" for statutory duties, and advises on procedures, law, and policy.
- **Financial Management:** Manages budgets, accounts, audits, and ensures careful administration of council finances.
- **Decision Implementation:** Carries out the instructions and decisions made by the council.
- **Information & Communication:** Prepares agendas, takes minutes, handles media, manages the council's website, and fosters community engagement.
- **Strategic Advice:** Advises the council on effective decision-making and assists in forming overall policies.
- **Civic Duties:** Supports mayoral and civic events.

#### In essence:

The Town Clerk is an independent, crucial advisor who guides the council, manages its resources, and ensures public affairs are conducted efficiently and legally, acting as a bridge between elected officials and the community.

## NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026

Month & Year	Town Council	Amenities Committee	F & GP Committee	Planning Committee
	Monday	Monday	Monday	Tue / Thu
January 2026	5	19	-	8 & 22
February 2026 21 Mayor's Tea	16	-	2	5 & 17 (Tue)
March 2026 7 Quiz Night HIOWAA 11 Civic Celebration	30	2	16	5 & 19
April 2026 20 Towns Assembly	-	14 (Tue)	27	2, 16 & 30
May 2026	11 Annual Meeting	26 (Tue)	-	12 (Tue) & 28
June 2026	29	-	15	11 & 25
July 2026 10 Indian Obelisk	-	6	20	7 (Tue) & 23
August 2026 23 WWII Clock	10	24	-	6 & 20
September 2026	28	-	7	3 & 17
October 2026 19 Annual Allots	-	13 (Tue)	26	1, 15 & 29
November 2026 8 Remembrance	9	23	-	12 & 26
December 2026 5 Carol Service	-	-	7	8 (Tues) & 22

**All meetings are normally held at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, 2 Ashley Road, BH25 6AS**  
**Members of the Public are welcome to attend any meeting and may speak as follows:**

- a) Town Council meetings will be adjourned at the beginning for a 'DEMOCRATIC HALF HOUR' during which members of the Public, with the approval of the Chairman, may initiate discussion on matters of community interest and which fall within the responsibility of the Town Council.
- b) Prior to the commencement of other meetings, and at the discretion of the Chairman, a short period of Public Participation may take place. 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.

**Annual Assembly (Town's Meeting)** - Is a public meeting required by statute to be held between 1 March and 1 June (inclusive) each year. **Note: It is not a Town Council meeting.**

**Annual Meeting of the Council** - In a year of ordinary elections of parish councillors, the annual meeting shall be held within 14 days of the councillors elected at that election taking office.





# Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton

Closes 11 Jan 2026

## Contact

Local Government Reorganisation

[LGRconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk](mailto:LGRconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk)

## Overview

This statutory consultation seeks views on the proposals that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received following the Secretary of State's invitation to councils in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton to submit proposals for unitary local government for their areas. You can find full details of the consultation, including a privacy statement, at: [Local government reorganisation in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton - GOV.UK](#)

The 4 proposals in this consultation were made by the following councils on 26 September 2025:

**Hampshire County Council & East Hampshire District Council proposed 4 unitary councils across the whole of the area of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton comprising the current areas of:**

- **Mid North:** Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester.
- **West:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton, Test Valley.
- **South East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth.

- **Isle of Wight:** Isle of Wight to remain unchanged.

You can find the proposal at: [Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire and the Solent: Simpler. Stronger. Secure](#)

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, New Forest District Council and Test Valley Borough Council proposed 5 unitary councils across the whole of the area of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton comprising the current areas of:

- **North:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor.
- **Mid:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester.
- **South East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth.
- **South West:** Eastleigh, Southampton.
- **Isle of Wight:** Isle of Wight to remain unchanged

You can find the proposal at: [Close enough to be local, big enough to stay strong.](#)

Please note that this is referred to as **Option 1** in their submission.

Eastleigh Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, Hart District Council, Havant Borough Council, Portsmouth City Council, Rushmoor Borough Council and Southampton City Council proposed 5 unitary councils across the whole of the area of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the areas of:

- **North:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor (North).
- **Mid:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester, (less 11 parishes from all four areas).
- **South East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, (plus 3 parishes of East Hampshire and 1 parish of Winchester).
- **South West:** Eastleigh, Southampton (plus 4 parishes from New Forest and 3 parishes from Test Valley).
- **Isle of Wight:** Isle of Wight to remain unchanged.



You can find the proposal at: [Close enough to be local, big enough to stay strong.](#)

Please note this is shown as **Option 1a** in their submission.

Winchester City Council proposed 5 unitary councils across the whole of the area of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **North:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor.
- **Mid:** East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester.
- **South East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth.
- **South West:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton.
- **Isle of Wight:** Isle of Wight to remain unchanged.

You can find the proposal at: [Close enough to be local, big enough to stay strong.](#)

Please note this is shown as **Option 2** in their submission.

**Gosport Borough Council** and **Isle of Wight Council** did not submit proposals.

This consultation asks questions about each proposal to help inform the assessment of the proposals.

[Share your views >](#)

Share



## Town Development Manager Report

For Town Council Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### 1. Neighbourhood Plan Review - Regulation 16 Consultation

The New Milton Neighbourhood Plan is in its formal Regulation 16 Consultation stage.

New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority are jointly consulting on the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan which was submitted to both authorities in 2025.

The updated draft Plan includes six proposed new policies, covering biodiversity, energy efficiency, conservation, local shops, brownfield sites and an Area of Special Character. Along with further retained and reviewed policies. Nine existing policies are proposed to be retained, while a further nine are proposed to be reviewed.

The document, which complies with NFDC's overarching Local Plan, which itself has also been under review, is not binding but must be considered by developers and planners.

Cllr Derek Tipp, NFDC portfolio holder for planning and economy, said:

"We welcome views from residents in New Milton. Their thoughts will help us to establish whether the policies in the draft neighbourhood plan suitably address local priorities. The plan will guide developments to meet the needs of the local area. The input of residents will help identify where local needs are being met and where they are being overlooked."

**The Consultation runs for an eight-week period from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to 5pm on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026.**

Comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan can be submitted via NFDC's webpage at:

<https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/2514/New-Milton-Neighbourhood-Plan>.

Paper copies of the draft plan and supporting documents can be viewed at:

- New Forest District Council Office, Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst
- New Forest National Park Authority Office, Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington

All comments received will be reviewed by an independent Examiner appointed by the two planning authorities NFDC and NFNPA and New Milton Town Council. The examiner will then recommend whether the updated document can be made with post-examination modifications, or whether it will need a local referendum. A local referendum would see the New Milton community asked whether they support the Neighbourhood Plan.



## ***2. Tourist Road Signs***

In a bid to highlight popular destinations within the town, work has commenced on reviewing signage options. The TDM has met with the Estates and Facilities Manager to discuss the guidance book on brown tourist signs from Hampshire County Council. A working party is set to begin this year where various options will be considered. The focus extends beyond town signage to include gateway signs and footpath signs.

## ***3. New Milton Town Council Website***

A newly designed Town Council website became active last year. This new design sees a section on visitor information showcasing the businesses, parking, travel and location of the town. This incorporates the previously led Go New Milton website into one easy to find space. Go New Milton's social media pages will be phased out by the end of January. A community notice board is also featured on the website to display poster advertising for local events. Please get in touch if you wish to add your business or event to the website.

## ***4. Thank You***

I would like to say a huge thank you to our community groups, residents and charities, including:

Friends of New Milton Station.

Friends of Ballard Water Meadow.

Local walking and cycling groups and residents – New Milton Cycling Club, Christchurch Bicycle Club and Transition Lymington.

New Milton Residents Association.

Milton Heritage Society.

Their hard work and success in 2025 have resulted in New Milton train station rising to impeccable standards, helped to form a revised Green Loop for the Neighbourhood Plan, and introduced new cycling and walking routes, along with housing and environmental policies.

We have also seen a Tube Map design for local cycling and walking routes submitted to Hampshire County Council as part of the New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Ballard Water Meadow & Woodland is set to be designated a Local Nature Reserve in 2026, to be known as Ballard Nature Reserve. Without the determination and support of such residents and groups we would be unable to shape a town for all.

We are indeed very fortunate. I truly thank you all and look forward to seeing further achievements in the New Year!

## Comms Officer Report

For Town Council Meeting on 5 January 2026

### Internal Communications

I am aware that in recent months there has been a marked increase in me sending outgoing emails sharing information with colleagues and councillors, about LGR, Waste & Recycling, news from community groups, etc.

It would be useful to receive your feedback on the value of this internal communication and if you have any suggestions on how this could be improved.

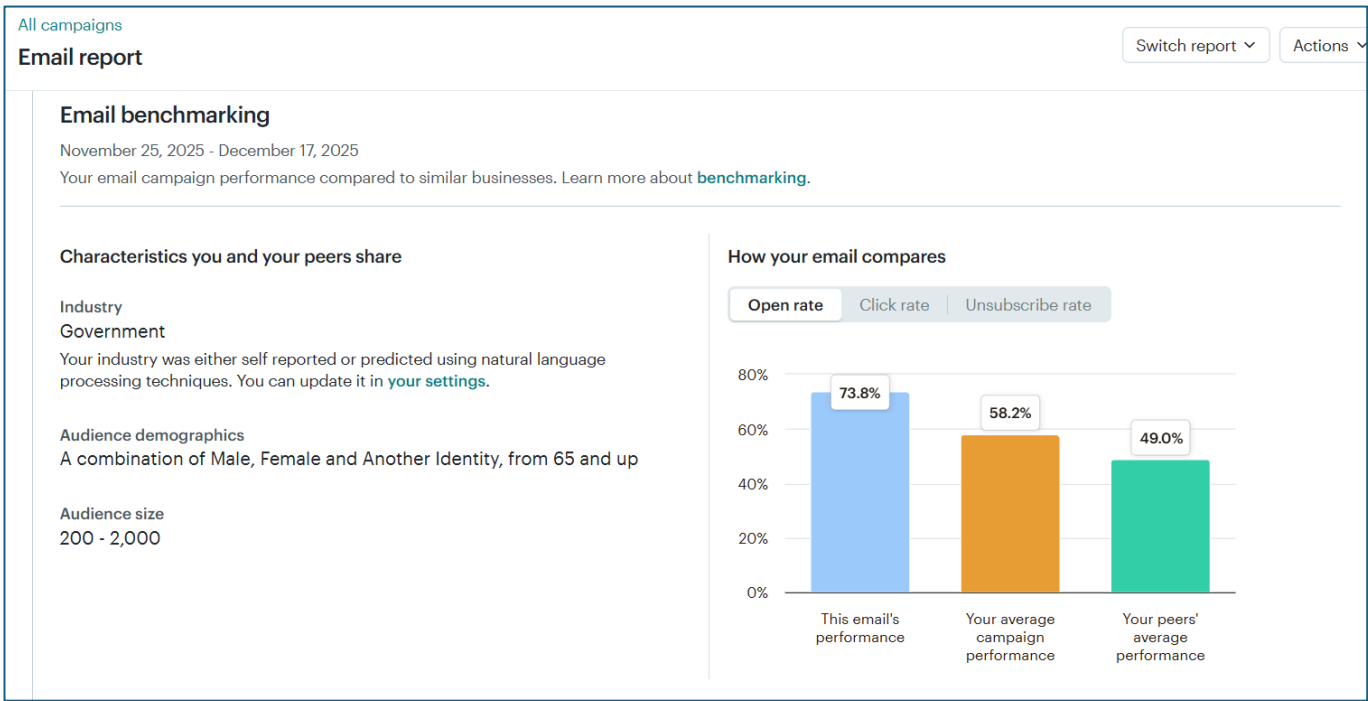
### External Communications - E-newsletter

Currently there are 237 subscribers to our E-newsletter. This year I will be reviewing the appeal of the e-newsletter with the aim of increasing subscriber numbers.

We use the Mailchimp platform to create and send e-news. The following screen shot provides an insight into the success of our e-news in comparison to similar government agencies.

This benchmarking report shows the open rate during the period 25 November – 17 December 2025. (The last e-news was distributed on 25 November 2025).

*Note: the next planned e-news is due to go out on 19 December 2025 – after this report has been created.*





## External Communications - Social Media

Our Facebook page has 2.2k followers and we follow 268 pages (charity groups, community groups, other councils, organisations and news platforms). In comparison to the following Town Councils:

<b>Christchurch Town Council</b>	3k followers
<b>Ringwood Town Council</b>	2.3k followers
<b>Hythe &amp; Dibden Parish Council</b>	2.3k followers
<b>Wimborne Minster Town Council</b>	2.1k followers
<b>Totton &amp; Eling Town Council</b>	1.2k followers

## External Communications - News Releases

Upcoming news articles in early January 2026 will include:

- Press release regarding the Christmas Family Fun event on 19 December 2025
- Outcome of the Official Unveiling of Heritage Information Signs
- Press Release - Launch of Community Champions Awards

## Website

Following the inclusion of an enhanced search function on our website, I continue to manage the website function and content, identifying the current areas to improve:

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) – this is an ongoing task to ensure our new website features more prominently in user searches via Google, Firefox, Chrome, Safari etc. A greater push will be made during 2026 to achieve this objective.
- Review Google Analytics and monitor website traffic and the website pages that users find of interest.
- Review and ensure website compliance [SLCC | WCAG2.2AA Compliant Accessible Websites](#)
- Introduction of Worldpay Portal for customers to pay invoices and fees to the Council.

## Civic Events

A reminder about our upcoming Civic Events:

- **Mayor's Afternoon Tea Party** at BOS Golf Club on **Saturday 21 February 2026**
- **Mayor's Quiz Night** at Bashley Village Hall on **Saturday 7 March 2026**
- **Civic Celebration** for our Community Heroes at Arnewood School on **Wednesday 11 March 2026**
- **Annual Towns Assembly** on **Monday 20 April 2026** – venue TBA

## Other NMTC events

NMTC working with Milton Heritage Society for the Official Unveiling of the Heritage Information Signs at St Mary Magdalene churchyard on **Saturday 10 January 2026** from 11am to 2pm.