

ANNUAL TOWNS' MEETING - 2025/26

Annual Report of the Town Council

Cllr Alvin Reid, Chairman / Mayor

Welcome to the 46th 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.

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 recognising the hard work of local organisations, volunteers, groups and charities.

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

At our 13th May Annual Meeting (AGM), I was re-elected as Chairman and Mayor and Cllr David Rice-Mundy was elected Vice-Chair and Deputy Mayor, taking over from Cllr Madalaine Craze who had done a sterling job.

At our 23rd June meeting, we heard from Jamie Anderson, the Headteacher of the Arnewood School who spoke about their Ofsted inspection 12 months ago which had been bruising. Since then, the staff had worked tirelessly to initiate improvements. They were being assessed by multi-academy trusts and were getting good responses. He felt that the changes that have been made are significant and sustainable.

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

At our 5th August meeting we heard about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Cllr Kendall spoke about the proposal put forward by HCC in response to the LGR. Their preferred proposal links Southampton, Eastleigh and the New Forest. His main concerns relate to the potential fragmentation of Adult and Children's Social Care. He is mindful that Barton and New Milton are on the edge of the proposed new authority.

Cllr Kendall's view was the commissioning authorities should join to ensure continuity of service for Social Care. He referenced Project Integra where Southampton, Portsmouth and Hampshire had jointly commissioned waste services around 15 years ago. This had been good for residents with continuity of service, and he felt a similar pattern should be followed for Social Care.

HCC had spent a lot of time and effort researching the options for LGR, he said and while not hugely enamoured with the proposed solution, there were limited options, LGR as a whole is being imposed on councils, by the government, with Councils having to work within strict parameters set out by central government. Cllr D N Tungate asked why Hampshire were so keen to link the New Forest to Southampton.

Cllr Kendall said that before 1997 Portsmouth, Hampshire and Southampton had been part of a big authority with that era seeing the largest growth. He observed that many residents of the New Forest work in Southampton as many of the major employers in the region are based there - if the New Forest joins with Test Valley then workers resident in the New Forest will be subject to rules that they have no say in as far as Southampton employment is concerned.

Cllr D Hawkins wished to speak about LGR following Mel Kendal's report saying it was ill-thought out and would cause havoc. Cllr Hawkins went on to say that he felt sympathy with anyone needing medical help and /or social care post LGR.

Cllr S P Davies reiterated that LGR is being imposed by central government, causing a lot of additional work. Cllr Davies recently represented Cllr Jill Cleary the NFDC Leader at a local Leaders' Meeting of 12 district and borough councils. They spoke a lot about SEND and Care, and the concern that reorganisation would not ensure continuity of service for residents. Local democracy is always an issue, currently 3,300 elect a district councillor, going forwards this number will increase significantly.

At our 29th September meeting, the Chairman highlighted the large attendance at the Friends of the New Forest Airfields Heritage Centre (FONFA) commemoration, the visit by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire to New Forest Disability Information Service to present Jackie Keable with her BEM and the irony that he had come to New Milton as the facilities at Hampshire could not accommodate a wheelchair user. However, his visit meant she was able to invite family and many guests to witness the wonderful occasion. Finally, the Mayor referred to the Harvest Civic Service noting the fantastic performance by the Highcliffe Percussion Ensemble in particular.

Cllr Fran Carpenter advised that HCC has now submitted its proposal for LGR but there is still more work being done which could throw it off course. The Isle of Wight council did not agree with devolution but have their meeting on Wednesday 1st October to discuss the LGR which could be interesting. There is also potential issue over Instruments of Implementation which must be voted on by all the councils concerned. Fran thought there would be County Council elections next year with business continuing as usual for at least the next 12 months pending LGR.

Cllr S Clarke advised that having reached the final stage for the New Milton Modified Neighbourhood Plan it will now be submitted to NFDC for their consideration. It is hoped that there will be no need for a referendum as although there have been meaningful changes, they are very much updates rather than new policies. The Plan now includes an up-to-date Housing Needs Assessment and a Town Centre Regeneration Area report. The review has been carried out by the working party which consists of both councillors and members of the public. It is an important document that has a measurable benefit in that it increases the entitlement to CIL monies to 25% from the 15% for councils without a neighbourhood plan. It was unanimously agreed

That the NP Submission Plan, Modification Statement and Proposal be adopted.

At our 10th November meeting, the Chairman took the opportunity to refer to the well-attended Remembrance Sunday event on 9 November and thanked the participants, saying that it had been very successful. In particular, he thanked Army Cadet Force, Arnewood, Ballard & Durlston Schools, Christchurch Scout Band, RBL Parade Marshall, Estates and council staff, Memorial Centre and Reverend Jon Westall for the service. Vice-Chairman, Cllr D Rice-Mundy reported that he had attended the Remembrance event at the Indian Memorial later in the day and mentioned a little of the history of the monument and the fact that there are only two Indian War Memorials.

The Chairman referred to a handwritten letter from pupils of the Eco Club at Durlston... *“We are pupils from Durlston School, and we are writing to urge the council to consider putting up hedgehog signs in the local area near our school. We want things to change because too many hedgehogs are killed on our roads every year.”* The letter also enclosed a petition with many signatures. Councillors were keen to assist the children in their fight to save the hedgehogs and it was unanimously agreed *“that the Town Clerk send a letter to the pupils advising them of our support with their endeavours and that the matter be referred to the Amenities Committee for further consideration, and practical support (warning signs) be provided to help protect the hedgehogs.”*

As a District Councillor, Cllr Blunden advised that he is supporting wreathmaking for young people at the Christmas event at the Ashley Youth and Family Hub via his NFDC community grant funding and is also supporting the Christmas lights in New Milton in the same way. Cllr Blunden as NFDC Portfolio Holder was very pleased to sign off the decision for free parking over 4 days during the Christmas period.

Cllr Adams advised that he had recently attended a meeting of the National Park Authority. They are pressing ahead with their Local Plan. There are plans for Forestry England (FE) to charge for parking at their car parks in the forest to raise money stating it would be spent on the forest. The New Forest is the only Crown property which does not yet levy car parking charges. Cllr Adams agreed there is a lot for FE to iron out.

Cllr Clarke noted that when AECOM (Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Operations and Management) had come to New Milton to give support with the Neighbourhood Plan, they had been very complimentary about the town and impressed with how busy it was. He said it is up to us all to support the local businesses and mentioned M&S, the new Lounge and a recent visit to the new deli on Station Road which had impressed both he and Cllr S Davies.

At our 5th January 2026 meeting, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank everyone for coming to the Carol Service and advised that £500 had been raised for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance, his chosen charity as Mayor. He went on to mention two other upcoming fundraising events: The Mayor’s Tea Party on 21st February 2026 at Barton on Sea Golf Club and the Mayor’s Quiz Night on 7th March.

The Communications Officer advised of progress with declaring Ballard Meadow & Woodland a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Alerting members to the Public Declaration Notice of Local Nature Reserve Status, the Town Clerk advised the application was progressing well and that notices would appear in the local press shortly. Once the application is complete, it will be known as Ballard Nature Reserve from 1 April 2026.

Referring to the council budget and precept for next year, the Chairman said increase in the precept is predominantly due to increased Capital Expenditure and an increase in the salary bill as two new members of staff will be recruited. The Chairman also mentioned that other items had been taken out of the budget such as the provision for Ash Tree die-back where money had been earmarked but not spent in previous years. **Members unanimously agreed the Budget & Precept of £1,631,666 for 2026-2027.**

The Chairman referred to information on the Consultation Process relating to LGR provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government introducing the matter advising that the District Council had unanimously endorsed Option 1 as their preferred option. Cllr G Blunden set out the reasoning behind the support for Option 1 as it was the only option taking account of the rural nature of the Forest and united it with other similarly rural areas rather than some of the other options which joined the Forest to more urban areas which have very different needs.

Cllr S Davies spoke in support of Option 1 also, although the decision is a matter for central government at the end of the consultation process, noting the LGR Consultation process closes on 11 January 2026. Cllr R Maynard asked that our submission make it clear that although we support Option 1, LGR is being imposed on Local Authorities by Central Government. It was unanimously agreed by those present that New Milton Town Council submit a response to the Local Government Reorganisation consultation supporting Option 1 put forward by NFDC.

At our meeting held on 16 February 2026, we received a written report from New Milton Police, as follows:

“Shoplifting continues to be one of the more prevalent crimes we investigate. We continue to be a targeted location easily accessed by train. There were 8 incidents in the past month – but 11 lower than last year.

As a team we work very hard on these incidents. CCTV is crucial in these cases, and we have a shoplifting pilot that means we don’t need to interview suspects if the evidence is clear – we can report for summons at a later date.

In terms of specific offences:

Burglaries – Residential 3 incidents down by 2 from last month. Business break-ins x2

Drug related Harm - One offender charged and remanded in prison.

Warrants – Three drug warrants issued in the past three months. All positive (drugs located) with ongoing enquiries with expected positive outcomes.

Vehicle Crime – Several thefts from motor vehicles including Catalytic converters.

Harassment – One suspect charged to go to court.

Criminal damage – Nothing of note. In May last year we had some Swastika graffiti on the town public toilets and bowls club. A 14-year-old youth was identified for that and has been working with the youth offending team, having admitted to the damage.

The report concluded:

“New Milton Neighbourhood Team continues to be the top performing team in the New Forest. Our detection rate sits well above what senior management desire. We are currently investigating 74 crimes, between four officers.”

The Town Clerk took members through important updates from the latest edition of the NALC Practitioners' Guide relating to changes for local authorities preparing Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGAR) for financial years starting on or after 1 April 2025, highlighting additional requirements, especially Assertion 10.

- The above explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software.
- This also relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.
- These updates streamline processes, enhance transparency, and improve overall governance standards to help ensure our authority is ready.
- Members noted the additional requirements of new Assertion 10 on the AGAR.

In support of securing Cyber Essentials Accreditation, Members agreed the five IT policies previously endorsed by F&GP be formally approved and adopted by the Town Council covering Acceptable Use Policy, Disaster Recovery Policy, Information Security Policy, Password Management Policy and Security Management Policy.

At our last meeting on 30 March 2026, Sgt Mark Atrill and PC Dan Tuckey attended.

Sgt Atrill advised there had recently been a focus on drug related harm, a big operation had led to the seizure of hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of drugs locally. This had resulted in a couple of arrests, and he hoped there would be further arrests. There was also a focus on business burglaries in the High Street, particularly the attacks on Bradbeers. Police had received information, and an offender was arrested for some of those attacks. Investigations are continuing into the others. There is currently a lot of shoplifting in the town, but vehicle crime is down.

Cllr V Schooling asked about ASB, saying that NMTC had spent over £40k in one year clearing it up. She asked what is being done. She also asked if more officers are needed and if the officers are over stretched. Sgt Atrill said that numbers of officers have been in decline for many years, more officers would be beneficial, his view is that the service is like an elastic band with no more flex in it.

Sgt Atrill advised that officers consider all intelligence about ASB but had not been able to identify any trends. PC Tuckey said that ASB is sporadic, catching someone in the act relies on being in the right place at the right time, officers regularly visit open spaces where young people hang out such as the Recreation Ground and Fawcetts Field. He said they engage positively with the young people as far as possible. Unfortunately, there are some people 'intent on vandalism'. The police work hard to try to catch them but cannot be everywhere at once.

Cllr O'Sullivan asked whether the shoplifters are local or visitors to the town. Sgt Atrill said that it's a mix of the two. The new Tesco Express close to the station has been particularly hard hit, with visitors hopping off the train, robbing the shop and hopping back on again. Many of the offenders do not have permanent addresses and so they are challenging to locate.

Cllr M Craze asked if there are any more officers joining the New Milton Team. Sgt Atrill said that a new PCSO is expected shortly as well as another PC. The Chairman thanked the officers for attending the meeting and for their detailed report. Members gave a round of applause by way of thanks.

Cllr Kendall apologised that he had been unable to attend the last few meetings due to holidays and illness. Not having much to report with the upcoming elections, and the changes which LGR would be bringing further down the line HCC is concerned about the 22,000 residents who use heating oil for their heating with the massive increase in oil prices due to the war in the Middle East. The government has given a grant of £500k to HCC so those suffering real deprivation will receive some help.

This was Cllr Kendall's final meeting; he is not standing for re-election in May after 29 years as a councillor. He thanked the members for their support, in particular Cllr A Reid, he had enjoyed working with NMTC and remembered projects they had worked on together. He mentioned improvements to the High Street which at the time had been awarded the highest amount given to a town to effect improvements. He said that the money had been well spent as the High Street still looks good in part due to the floral displays and care of the Estates Team. He also mentioned implementing the "20 is Plenty" campaign. Cllr Kendall received a round of applause and then left.

Cllr Carpenter mentioned that we are now in the pre-election period which started on 25th March. HCC is unable to make big decisions or announcements at present because of this. HCC have requested details from the government in relation to their LGR decision, she said it was difficult to match their decision to their own criteria. She advised that the Mid Hants model presents unique problems, it will have the highest concentration of elderly people in Hampshire as well as the highest number of small village schools. Finally, she thanked everyone for their support over the years. She hoped to be back after the May elections. Members also applauded her contribution.

Cllr Clarke reported that the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation has now gone through. He thanked all residents who had attended the various events, including the New Milton event which had been well attended. All in all, over 1,400 people had visited the events and there had been 800 responses to the consultation online. The NMTC response had been agreed by the Planning Committee. The consultation is meaningful and peoples' views will be considered, but the tendency is that while everyone sees the need for more housing, they don't like the proposed sites.

Cllr Blunden thanked the County Councillors again for their support saying that current challenges are tough. He felt particular concern for the Waterside residents. He stated that NFDC will continue to serve all residents as best they could. He observed that the Town Council is the bedrock of delivering locally.

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

6 April 2026



ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2026

Planning Committee – Cllr S J Clarke

The Planning Committee has delegated power from Town Council to give recommendations on any form of development application 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, Highways, utilities and other major infrastructure. The usual meeting date is an alternate Thursday but sometimes shifts to a Tuesday.

	2024-25	2025-26
N.F.D.C Planning	146	171
National Park Planning	12	7
Trees	61	70

The following applications were considered –

- Land east of Brockhills Lane now known as Danes Park - Strategic site for 164 dwellings (Application 21/11179) .Phase 1 started in April 2025. We continue to get regular progress reports from the NFDC Enforcement Officer and there have been several 'sales advertising' applications for the site so far.
- BT Street Hubs, due to be outside Marks and Spencer, Morrisons and Bradbeers Furniture Store in replacement of the current phone boxes. The applications are currently at appeal having been objected to at the Town Council and refused by New Forest District Council.
- Bradbeers store elevation changes (Application 25/10703). This was permitted in October and would see a more streamlined frontage with cladding on first and second floors, plus a glazed balustrade to the south for a roof terrace element to the restaurant.
- Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan – back in February the Main Modifications document was released for comment, following the hearings that had previously taken place as part of its Examination.
- The previous HSBC Bank reopened as 'Espino', part of the Lounges Group. After initial concerns about pavement use, New Forest District Council made it clear that all use of had been appropriately sanctioned.

Recently the New Forest District Councils Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation has taken place, and deadline for comment was 20th March. It looked at Spatial Options and Policy Direction, with the outcome due within the draft Local Plan in the autumn. Amongst the most recent document was a summary of housing targets and constraints, where the new housing could potentially be sited, and suggestions of substantial development east of Stem Lane crossing the Hampshire/Dorset border, a new village at Downton and other smaller scale potential sites.

The New Milton Neighbourhood Plan Review is about to progress to Inspection, with dates currently not confirmed.

I thank my fellow Committee members and officers Theresa Elliott and Joy Bean for their ongoing hard work and diligence.

ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2025-26

Amenities Report - Cllr G R Blunden

On 13 May 2025, I was re-elected as Chairman of the Amenities Committee, and Cllr Madalaine Craze was re-elected as Vice Chair.

On 27 May 2025, at our first Amenities Committee meeting of the new civic year, I asked the Town Clerk to remind members of the 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.

The Chairman outlined a range of schemes and projects the Town Council aims to progress over the coming year. These include a combination of capital projects, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)-funded initiatives, and upcoming proposals to be submitted to New Forest District Council for CIL bids.

The Chairman also highlighted areas for delivery over the coming year including:

Capital Projects:

Fernhill: Boundary fencing improvements and work to the area surrounding the clubhouse.

Long Meadow: Installation of new play park, footpath enhancements, and bridge replacement.

Town Centre Recreation Ground: Replacement play equipment for the multi-play area.

CIL-Funded Projects:

Ballard Meadow: Creation of footpath link across the southern boundary to the Lake.

Carrick Wood: Footpath works and environmental improvements.

Ashley Recreation Ground: Installation of a new sports wall and sensory play board.

Hollands Wood Drive: Multi play unit and fencing around the area.

NFDC CIL Bids:

Including Fawcetts Field Car park improvements/resurfacing; Fawcetts Field BMX Pump Track; Barton Common Footpath improvements; and Danesbury Meadow Footpath improvements. The Chairman also noted plans to improve the Green Loop footpath network and confirmed that the Council will soon conclude its assessment of the proposed Nature Reserve designation of Ballard Water Meadow.

Councillor D E Hawkins queried whether the installations at Ashley would integrate well with the area. The Estates Manager clarified that they are adjacent to the existing play area and are well-suited to the location.

Two items of correspondence received were placed before the committee to note:

- a) An email received querying the Town Council's involvement with the Memorial Hall. The Town Clerk clarified that the Memorial Hall is a separate charity and that the Town Council has no direct influence over its decisions. The Chairman added that the Council does try to listen to what the Memorial Hall has to say, offer thoughts where appropriate, and remains interested in the activities taking place there.
- b) An email received informing Members of the sad passing of Ted Horne BEM, at the age of 104. In relation to the upcoming funeral with full military honours, the Town Clerk estimated around 100 people, including staff and councillors, would be attending the funeral of the former RBL Parade Marshall.

The Chairman thanked the Youth Services Manager for her report on Ashley HUB use and for the positive work being carried out for the community, highlighting the successful and proactive use of the facility, including HAF. The Town Clerk provided an update regarding HAF funding. Members supported this.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme provides support to families whose children are eligible for benefit-related free school meals (FSM), across the county throughout the Easter, summer and winter school holidays. Other children and families may also be eligible to access this programme. Funding has been agreed by HCC to run a HAF scheme at Ashley Youth Hub.

Funding has been agreed by HCC to run a HAF scheme at Ashley Youth Hub. The scheme will deliver 20 places per day for 16 days, with activities including food, sports, crafts, a drugs workshop, and mindfulness sessions, and do their own cooking and baking. At a value of £54.25 per place, the total cost for 320 places was £17,360.

At our meeting on 7 July 2025, a request was received from New Milton Rugby Club to install **advertising boards** on the wooden fencing outside the changing room entrance/exit for advertising purposes.

The Chairman highlighted that the Council's current policy does not permit advertising. One member noted that the Club is seeking funding to support youth rugby and wellbeing, with advertising proposed only during the rugby season.

Concerns were raised regarding shared use of the space, planning implications, and setting a precedent, noting the land is actually a Recreation Ground. While some members supported maintaining the existing policy, others felt the matter warranted further consideration at the next Amenities Committee meeting.

Regarding proposed new CIL Bids, the Chairman clarified that the bids listed on the agenda are based on broad cost estimates at this stage. Detailed project specifications and refined costings will follow if the bids are approved by New Forest District Council.

The following CIL bids were noted:

- a) BMX Pump Track at Moore Close (Note the only bid subsequently approved)
- b) Surfacing of the car park at Fawcetts Field
- c) Footpath improvements at Barton Common
- d) Two play areas at Danesbury Meadows

The Chairman confirmed that all proposals had previously been brought to committee and noted that the BMX pump track has featured in the Council's Vision Plan for Fawcetts Field / Moore Close for several years.

Re the joint NMTC/NFDC Ballard Lake project, the Chairman referred members to some recent photos. The project is expected to be completed by the end of August. The Chairman visited the lake and reported that informal conversations with members of the public indicated they were very pleased with the improvements.

Plans for an official opening are currently on hold due to ongoing bird flu concerns. A revised date sometime in September was being considered. Members commented that improvements were fantastic, having given the lake a more tranquil atmosphere.

The Chairman noted an official opening is being organised by New Forest District Council (NFDC) with New Milton Town Council (NMTC) support.

At our meeting on 1 September 2025, members received an update on the proposed **No. 1 New Milton Project** from Friends of New Milton Station.

Julia Stamper and Mandy Hayes, the project representatives, provided an illustrated presentation regarding proposals for the former Station Masters house and garden.

Community consultations are scheduled to take place on Friday 5th September at the Town Hall and on Sunday 6th September at the Lions VJ80 Event on the Recreation Ground and Online from 5th to 19th September.

The Chairman thanked the project representatives for their presentation and reiterated that the Town Council was fully supportive of the project, noting that the Council had set the foundation stone for others to continue. He acknowledged the challenges around final costs but expressed hope that, at the appropriate time, further funding opportunities such as NFDC could be explored.

The Chairman wished the project every success, with Members echoing this support.

The Chairman referred to **advertising boards**, noting the number of clubs that are supported across the town.

Highlighting many sites, including Fawcetts, the Recreation Ground, Fernhill, Ashley, are open spaces in a rural setting, the Chairman said that introducing additional signage would be out of keeping. He emphasised that significant work had been undertaken to reduce signage clutter.

The Chairman proposed the existing policy remain unchanged, and this was seconded by Cllr M Craze. Cllr D E Hawkins spoke against the proposal, emphasising the financial pressures on clubs, particularly the Rugby Club, arguing temporary signage on matchdays would provide valuable support without causing significant impact.

The Chairman clarified the request before the Council related to permanent signage on fence posts and hedges. Further discussion followed, with Members raising concerns about setting a precedent for other clubs and the importance of maintaining fairness. Alternative suggestions, such as limiting signage use or trialling temporary boards, were considered but noted to be inconsistent with the established policy of reducing visual clutter.

The Chairman then re-stated his proposal that the existing policy remain unchanged, which was seconded by Cllr A D O'Sullivan. Upon being put to the vote, with 5 in favour and 2 against, it was agreed the existing policy would remain in place.

Providing an update on **Ballard Nature Reserve**, the Chairman referred to extensive background work undertaken and was pleased to see the declaration progressing.

One Member asked whether any implications or criteria needed to be considered before the site could be formally named. The Chairman confirmed the next stage would be to contact NFDC, as landowner, seeking permission and then approach Natural England, with further stages to follow.

Another Member asked what would happen to NFDC owned land if unitary authorities were established. The Chairman responded that such land would transfer with existing policies in place, though these may be subject to future change.

Reference **Long Meadow Play Area** the working party had met some time ago and at that stage three quotations had been obtained. The process has since progressed, and as is now required, the opportunity was advertised on the Government's Contract Finder website. Eight enquiries were received before the deadline closed, two of which were rejected as not meeting the criteria. Six valid submissions remain, with scope of works and design briefs issued with responses due by 23rd September.

The Chairman invited members to official opening of **Ballard Lake Enhancements**, confirming 9th September at 2:00pm for a 2:30pm start. He also thanked the Estates & Facilities Team for their prompt response in clearing up recent vandalism at the lake.

At our 14 October 2025 meeting, the Chairman outlined proposals for the Long Meadow Play Area that would be discussed further in private session.

The Chairman said:

“The enhanced play area seeks to meet a recognised shortfall in play provision for a wider age group and abilities range in Barton on Sea, by providing within the existing footprint a range of equipment and surfaces for children of all ages, that is also accessible to disabled children & carers in accordance with current national guidelines.

The scheme seeks to not only replace an existing 15-year-old provision that is small in scale and limited to certain ages, but to address the recognised shortfall in provision for children in the local area. The design encourages users to come together and use the proposed play space regardless of age or ability, bringing the community together.”

In private session, it was recommended that KOMPAN be the appointed preferred contractor in the sum of £89,992.51.

At our meeting on 24 November 2025, Bob Lord, Chairman of the Friends of Ballard Water Meadow and Barton Common Volunteer Ranger, enquired about the grazing arrangements at Ballard Meadow and what had gone wrong this year. He noted that bramble management along the margins had been missed by NFDC and that, due to areas becoming overgrown, contractor intervention may soon be necessary. In relation to the designation of Ballard Meadow and Woodland as a Local Nature Reserve, hoped for encouraging news on proposals and for an event to celebrate the designation, along with rejuvenated signage to reflect this status.

In response to comments made by Bob Lord regarding **grazing**, the Chairman explained that the issues had arisen due to circumstances beyond the Council's control. The Council had made considerable efforts to secure graziers but had been let down. The Chairman noted that the Council is still seeking to resolve the issue, though not confident this will be achieved within the year and may have no choice but to clear the site using mechanical means. Regarding the designation of Ballard Meadow and Woodland as a **Local Nature Reserve**, the Chairman confirmed that this would be addressed later on at this meeting.

The Town Clerk referred to a handwritten letter from pupils of the Eco Club at Durlston, previously addressed at the Town Council meeting on 10 November, that was referred to the Amenities Committee. The letter concerned **protecting hedgehogs** in the local area and possibility of installing signage.

The Chairman advised that, if pupils wished to display information on town noticeboards, this could be arranged and suggested they work with the Men's Shed to produce small signs for sites owned by the Town Council, including Barton Common car park and the entrance to Long Meadow Village Green. Members were very supportive of this proposal and welcomed the initiative.

The Chairman referred to **Committee Budgets for 2026/2027**, and the Town Clerk presented the proposed Amenities Budget for 2026/2027, highlighting that an extra member of staff had been budgeted and that statutory testing costs had increased considerably. It was noted that the auditor had advised the Council it would require a health and safety manager next year.

Cllr S Clarke remarked that statutory testing and health and safety issues represent increasing costs each year and are unavoidable, also noting the Council's obligation regarding staff training. The Town Clerk explained the CAPEX amount of £250k, including a £17k contingency. It was recommended that the Amenities Budget, in the sum of £963,341 be endorsed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Regards **Long Meadow Play Area** the Chairman said he was pleased to see the new bridge in place and commended the quality of work. The Estates & Facilities Manager reported that the order had been placed with the contractor, with works scheduled to begin in mid-January and expected to last five weeks, subject to weather conditions.

Re the Declaration of Local Nature Reserve Status the Town Clerk outlined the designation process and requirements to be met, including the future signing of a public declaration notice. He confirmed that the process is progressing well and that the declaration for Ballard Meadow and Woodland was ready to be signed. The Town Clerk and Chairman duly signed the document, which will be sent to Natural England.

The Chairman emphasised the project is progressing well.

At our meeting on 19 January 2026, we received news of the sad passing of D-Day Veteran Jim Justice, whose funeral was planned for Monday 02 February 2026 at the New Forest Crematorium, with full military honours, from 12 noon on that day.

The Town Clerk reminded members of Jim Justice, who recently passed away peacefully at Mornington Court Care Home just a few weeks before his 100th birthday.

Jim Justice attended both the 2025 and 2024 Sunday Remembrance Services at the War Memorial in New Milton, lastly as a 99-year-old D-Day veteran. A Green Jacket who lived locally, Rifleman Jim Justice landed in Normandy, his platoon then marched to liberate Bayeux, encountering resistance on the way.

In 2024, Jim visited commemorative events in Normandy with the RBL, had tea with the Royal Family, attended a Lions Club VE80 music event in New Milton as guest of honour and receiving applause for his wartime contributions. Jim represented the dwindling number of D-Day participants.

There were several other updates:

Fawcetts Field – NFDC footpath and planting improvement work. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained the work being carried out by NFDC as part of the previously agreed Vision Plan, confirming there would be no loss of playing areas and advised there would be some slight disruption on weekdays, but not at weekends

Carrick Wood – NFDC planting work to be undertaken by NMTC. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained the project has two phases, the first has been completed by NFDC and included footpath and furniture improvements. The second phase will be carried out by New Milton Town Council and will consist of planting work, being funded by NFDC CIL monies.

Long Meadow Play Area – Progress of the new play area. The Estates & Facilities Manager advised work would commence on 28 January, with completion expected toward the end of February, subject to weather conditions, adding that the Estates & Facilities team will clear the site in preparation for Kompan to carry out the works.

Ballard Nature Reserve - The Town Clerk reported that the application had been submitted to Natural England and that they were supportive, explaining the Public Notice and Declaration of Local Nature Reserve Status had been signed, and the Communications Officer was in the process of advertising the Public Notice locally.

Grazing Licence - The Town Clerk provided an update confirming the Town Council is in discussions with a grazier and the matter is ongoing. Concern was raised regarding ground conditions, to which the Chairman acknowledged that this would need to be taken into consideration, especially at this time of year.

Street Trading - The Chairman explained that since the matter was first raised at Committee before Christmas, a number of emails were received by the Town Council and by individual Members expressing how much residents value the market, voicing support for the remaining stall, and stating that they do not wish to see the market lost.

The Chairman advised that when the working party meets, it will discuss ways of attracting additional stallholders and revisiting what can be done to revive the market.

At our meeting on 2 March 2026, the Chairman thanked Mandy Hayes for the suggestion of a joint opening event (Ballard LNR and Ballard Lake Improvements) noting that it seemed a very good idea and that the Local Nature Reserve status should indeed be celebrated. In the absence of Bob Lord, of the Friends of Ballard Water Meadow and his role as Volunteer Ranger at Barton Common, an interim point of contact would be needed during his absence to streamline communication.

The Chairman referred to the **CIL Projects Review** covering the four projects below:

- Carrick Wood (Phase 2) completion of the CIL project awarded £40k
- Hollands Wood Drive being a fenced Multi-Play Unit awarded £41.5k
- Ashley Recreation Ground Sports Wall /Sensory Board awarded £32k
- Moore Close / Fawcetts Field for a BMX Pump Track awarded £38.8k

Re Carrick Wood, the Chairman noted a drop kerb will be installed at the Carrick Way entrance to improve accessibility, confirming this can be funded within existing CIL.

A member asked whether there were relevant contacts who could be approached in relation to the proposed **Pump Track at Moore Close** / Fawcetts Field. The Chairman explained that, a few years ago, some individuals had informally used the wooded area for cycling activity similar to what a pump track would accommodate, noting that those individuals had been supportive of the concept during earlier discussions. Noting that updated views would need to be sought for both the Pump Track and the multi-play unit at Hollands Wood, this proposal would form part of the forthcoming engagement process. The Chairman emphasised that the projects presented are drafts which will be developed further following public consultation.

The Chairman referred to **Open Access** and the Town Clerk guided members through the amended policy highlighting in particular the updated wording relating to drones. The Chairman noted much of the Council's land is leased from NFDC, and therefore our policies are aligned with theirs and with those of neighbouring authorities, adding that being out of step could encourage disproportionate activity in our area. Discussion followed regarding scooters, during which Cllr A D O'Sullivan proposed that the current wording be amended to include the word "powered" before "scooters". This was supported by all members. It was recommended that the amended Open Access Policy be endorsed by the F&GP Committee for approval by full Town Council.

Finally, the Chairman provided members with an update following the recent meeting of the **Street Trading** Working Party. This included advice from NABMA - National Association of British Market Authorities - of which the Town Council is a member, noting Street Trading is regarded by the Valuation Office as a "special regime".

In closing, the Chairman said:

"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 2025-26

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 31 October 2025, and the 2026-27 Budget was recommended by F&GP on 8 December 2025 in the sum of £1,631,666. This was subsequently agreed, and a **Precept** of the same amount was approved by Town Council on 5 January 2026, and New Milton's proportion of Band D council tax increased by 30p per week to £150.72 pa which compares favourably to other local councils in the New Forest district, being less than Fawley, Fordingbridge, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington, Marchwood and Totton.

F&GP follows a strict **Work Plan**, ensuring financial performance is continually reviewed and monitored in a timely way by Councillors, 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 and has the necessary policies and procedures in place. Since March 2025, F&GP has variously endorsed policies and procedures covering Absence Management, Environmental Sustainability, Data Protection, Equality & Diversity, Recording of Meetings, Use of Social-Media, Exclusion of Public and Member/Officer Safety together with Biodiversity, Child Protection & Safeguarding in April 2025.

In support of securing **Cyber Essentials Accreditation** 5 new IT policies previously endorsed by F&GP were formally approved and recently adopted by Town Council covering Acceptable Use Policy, Disaster Recovery Policy, Information Security Policy, Password Management Policy and Security Management Policy.

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 ever popular Ashley Family HUB that provides 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 we now have HAF (Holiday Activities & Food) coverage during school holidays. 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 has reviewed its operational **Risk Assessments** to help identify assess and mitigate risks. Our Current Risk Assessments cover 100 risks from AdBlue and Antifreeze to Working at Height and Outside. A list of **Governance & Management Risks** includes Cyber Security, Emergency Planning, Health & Safety, Data Protection, Safeguarding, Legal Governance, Fraud, Asset Protection, Business Activities, Investments. The list has been growing annually as more risks are identified. For instance, the new focus on Cyber Security and associated demands of the new regulatory AGAR Assertion 10 affecting completion of Annual Returns. These new headings are similar to those that NFDC use in its Principal Risk Register.

Administration of various **Grant Aid** is also the responsibility of this Committee and this financial year grants amounting to **£3,710** were provided to local good causes. There was one **Youth Grant** awarded of **£14,136**. New Milton Youth Trust has taken over much detached youth work on the War Memorial Recreation Ground. The Lions Club were separately granted **£3,700** for two events (Whit Event and VJ Day) and Artful Scribe received £500 towards its annual Play on Words Festival from the **Community Events** budget. Finally, **CAB** were awarded **£5,000** under Service Level Agreement. **Total 2025-26 grants of £27,046** (2024-25: £27,500)

This year's **CAPEX budget of £250k** was proposed by Amenities, endorsed by F&GP and approved by Town Council at its meeting on 5 January 2026, covering 11 projects as detailed in the attached Capex Projects. Referring to this year's budget, the increase in precept is predominantly due to increased Capex and an increase in the salary bill as two new members of staff will be recruited in the coming months ahead of Local Government Reorganisation. As the Chairman previously mentioned, other items have been taken out of the budget such as the provision for Ash Tree dieback, where money earmarked in previous years was not spent.

As noted above, the F&GP remit is both wide and varied. Approaching the last year of this Administration, I would like to thank all my Councillor colleagues and members of staff for their invaluable contributions.



PROPOSED CAPEX BUDGET

2026-27

Fawcetts Field – Car Park

Resurfacing of the existing gravel car park, minor drainage and upgrade to car park lighting. This is a subject of a current CIL bid which if successful the Town Council will match fund (this is included below) along with an additional sum for upgraded lighting and landscaping improvements (also included). If the CIL bid is not successful it is proposed to carry out the surfacing in two phases, Phase one in 2026/27 FY and Phase two completion in 2027/28 FY.

£57k

Fawcetts Field – Training Pitch

The existing training pitch floodlight are long overdue for upgrading with the current ones being sodium which are subject to regular failures and are not energy efficient. The training pitch is used three evenings a week during the football season Tuesday to Thursday and is well used. It is proposed to upgrade to full LED lighting which provides improved lighting quality but most importantly will reduce energy costs significantly.

£17.5k

Fernhill Sports Ground – Pavilion upgrade

Phase two of the pavilion upgrade which includes toilet refurbishment and improved changing facilities.

£48k

Fernhill Sports Ground – Roller shutters

The external roller shutter security doors are now over twenty years old and are starting to be a maintenance issue. It is proposed to replace the main shutters with updated and more reliable ones.

£12.5k

New Milton Recreation Ground - Outdoor Bowls, High Level Fencing

Over the last few years there have been issues with missiles being thrown over the hedge from the skatepark and on to the lower green. The incidents have now increased and has now become a serious health and safety issue with users of the green at risk of being hit by one of the missiles. During spring/summer of 2025 a temporary high-level netting system was installed to prevent this re-occurring. This structure was successful and prevented further incidents.

It is proposed to install a permanent high level aesthetically pleasing structure in place of the temporary one. It should be noted that whilst CCTV and increased police patrols are helpful as part of prevention, on their own they will not be fully able to prevent missiles being thrown and the town council has a duty of care to act on known risks such as this and mitigate as much as possible.

£15.75k

New Milton Recreation Ground - MUGA upgrade, including Fencing

The current MUGA equipment has now been in-situ for ten years and needs upgrading with much of the equipment damaged or worn out. The high-level perimeter fence which was part of the original tennis courts has been there much longer and is now beyond economical repair, having been identified as an H&S issue following the annual safety inspection.

However, the replacement fencing does not have to be the same height for the full perimeter with more appropriate fencing used for the most part. It is therefore proposed to replace the current equipment with an updated and more suitable offering along with new and amended fencing.

£30.25k

War Memorial Recreation Ground - Outdoor Fitness Equipment

One piece of the outdoor fitness equipment has been removed for safety reasons, and others are no longer functioning as intended the safety surfacing is also beyond repair and needs replacing.

The equipment was installed in 2016 as part of the play area upgrade and has proved popular with all ages and families.

It is proposed to replace the existing equipment with updated versions and provide a more appropriate surfacing.

£14k

War Memorial Recreation Ground - Performance Pavilion

The performance pavilion was opened in 2013 as part of the overall Recreation Ground Vision Plan and has been used for many events over the last twelve years. It is now in need of some refurbishment, and it is proposed to carry out this work in the 2026/27 financial year if budget is available. The works would consist of re-powder coating the mainframe, replacing the high-level vent mesh and replacement of damaged soffit panels along with upgrading to more energy efficient lighting.

£15k

NMTC Facilities General

Replace existing fire doors at various facilities identified on our fire risk assessment and subsequent inspection and report Phase two. This work needs to be carried out in 2026/27 to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire) Order.

£9k

Station Road - Metropolis Benches

The French Metropolis benches (33 in total) that form part of the Station Road Street Scene furniture have been in place for nearly 20 years and are becoming a costly maintenance issue with most slats now at “end of life” and the steel uprights becoming corroded. The Estates & Facilities have team have - as part of the maintenance programme - removed slats and treated them with new coats of timber preservative but the slats are now not responding to this treatment and are becoming worn. The Metropolis benches are no longer available nor are the slats. It is therefore proposed to carry out a phased replacement programme commencing in the 2026/27 FY. The new benches would still fit in with our current Streetscene but would be low maintenance.

Phase 1 £14k

Proposed CAPEX 2026/27 £233k

Plus £17k (7.296%) Contingency

TOTAL £250k

Introduction

Over the past year, Ashley Family Hub and its associated services have continued to grow in strength, visibility, and impact across the New Milton community. Our programmes have expanded significantly, our partnerships have deepened, and our role as a central, trusted resource for families and young people has never been stronger.

1. Ashley Family Hub

1.1 Increased Community Use

The hub remains a vibrant, heavily used space for families, young people, and partner organisations. Over the past year, we have welcomed and delivered:

- Health services
- Infant feeding support group
- A cancer support group
- A baby sling library
- Baby and toddler groups
- Small group and 1:1 support sessions for families needing signposting or practical support (e.g. SEN support, EHCP guidance)

These activities have strengthened connection, reduced isolation, and ensured families can access timely support in a welcoming environment.

1.2 Santa's Workshop

Our annual Santa's Workshop was a highlight of the festive season:

- Over **50 children** visited Santa
- **50 wreaths** were made
- Youth-made crafts were sold
- Volunteers and donors created a warm, welcoming event
- Supported by councillors, New Milton Residents Association, and local businesses

1.3 Christmas Present Support

We wrapped and distributed Christmas presents to local underprivileged families, ensuring children across the community could enjoy a special and memorable festive season.

2. Youth Services

Youth services delivered through the Ashley Family Hub and the wider New Milton community have expanded significantly in both scale and impact. With a focus on wellbeing, inclusion, leadership development, and access to positive opportunities, the programme continues to address emerging needs such as:

- Mental health challenges
- School attendance difficulties
- Cost-of-living pressures affecting families

Through targeted support, high-quality holiday provision, enhanced safeguarding, and strong partnership working, our youth offer has become a cornerstone of support for children and young people in New Milton.

2.1 Growing Engagement and Impact

Attendance across all youth groups has remained consistently strong. We are seeing young people increasingly:

- Take ownership of projects
- Contribute ideas for programme development
- Support their peers
- Lead activities with confidence

This emerging leadership has boosted confidence, strengthened social skills, and fostered a greater sense of belonging.

3. Mental Health & Wellbeing Programmes

3.1 Wellbeing Programme (Two Cohorts Completed)

Funded by the New Forest Local Children's Partnership, our two wellbeing cohorts received excellent feedback. Young people reported improvements in:

- Confidence
- Emotional resilience
- Self-awareness
- Ability to manage challenges

A full outcomes report will be produced separately.

3.2 Monday Wellbeing Group

This group has become a valued, stable community offering:

- Wellbeing discussions
- Peer support
- Creative sessions
- Workshops exploring mental health, self-esteem, and coping strategies

Wellbeing Champions at the Youth Conference

Young people played a role in the **Wellbeing Youth Conference (October 2025)**, contributing by:

- Designing and co-leading workshops
- Preparing 100 handmade bracelets, origami hearts, and affirmation cards
- Delivering three youth-led sessions on positivity and social action

This was a significant developmental milestone for participants, boosting confidence, leadership, and pride.

3.3 Young Carers Youth Club

In partnership with Community First, we run dedicated youth club sessions for young carers, offering:

- Respite
- Social connection
- Practical support
- A safe space to relax and enjoy time with peers

3.4 Food for Thought

We have received funding to deliver **Food for Thought**, a programme supporting young people to explore the links between food, health, and wellbeing. Three groups will run:

- Eaglewood School
- Arnewood School
- Our wellbeing youth group

4. Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programmes

HAF provision remains central to our youth support, offering essential structure, nutrition, and enrichment during school holidays for families eligible for Free School Meals and for young people needing additional support.

4.1 Easter 2025

Delivered across Arnewood School and Ashley Family Hub, activities included:

- Rugby (with emphasis on female participation)
- Music and recording
- Graffiti art
- Video production
- Leadership development
- Healthy breakfast preparation

Hampshire County Council praised our provision as “**the best she had seen**”, selecting it as a **case study for the Department for Education**.

4.2 Summer 2025 Programme

We delivered:

- **16 days** of activities
- **20 FSM-funded spaces per day**
- A mini-festival with a youth-led DJ set

Activities included:

- A wide range of sports
- Creative arts (jewellery, slime, felt crafts)
- Baking and cooking
- Wellbeing workshops
- Board Games
- Leadership opportunities for young volunteers

Outcomes included:

- A young person experiencing school refusal re-engaged socially
- A young leader overcame severe anxiety
- Improved teamwork, confidence, and communication

4.3 Christmas HAF 2025

Delivered across four days and included:

- Sports and games
- Arts, crafts, and wreath-making
- Cooking and baking
- Wellbeing and relaxation sessions

Christmas Hampers

We distributed **20 hampers** containing:

- Food and household items
- Ingredients & recipe cards
- Books and activity materials
- Family play resources

4.4 February Half Term

- February HAF was successfully delivered
- Funding secured for **8 Easter sessions** and **16 summer sessions**

4.5 Easter 2026 - Year 6 Transition Support

A new programme was introduced to support vulnerable Year 6 pupils with:

- Confidence-building workshops
- Site familiarity visits at Arnewood School
- Transition coaching

5. Home Education Support

5.1 Local Need

According to Hampshire County Council:

- 336 EHE young people in the New Forest
- 221 eligible for FSM
- 22 with EHCPs
- Many more unregistered families
- High levels of mental health and attendance challenges

5.2 Programme Development

We introduced:

- Reading-focused groups
- Book clubs
- Board game sessions
- Wellbeing and personal development workshops
- Parent support and signposting

5.3 Expanded Work

We also provide support for young people experiencing attendance difficulties through:

- 1:1 conversations
- Exploring future careers and goals
- Outdoor learning in the forest
- Activity and event planning
- Leadership development

This has strengthened:

- Confidence
- Independence
- Communication skills
- Purpose and motivation
- Engagement with learning

For some, this provision acts as a stepping stone back into education.

6. Safeguarding, Training & Quality Standards

6.1 Safeguarding Training

Training delivered to New Milton Town Council officers and councillors improved:

- Awareness of safeguarding duties
- Confidence in responding to concerns
- Understanding of real-world scenarios

6.2 First Aid Training

Level 3 Pediatric First Aid was delivered to:

- Staff
- Volunteers
- Youth leaders

This has strengthened safety and leadership pathways.

6.3 Ofsted Registration

We achieved **full Ofsted registration (2026)**, demonstrating:

- High-quality provision
- Strong governance
- Safe staffing and processes
- Commitment to national standards

7. Environmental & Community Integration

7.1 Plant a Tree Initiative

Young people supported the development of our green space, learning:

- Environmental responsibility
- Sustainability practices
- Practical outdoor skills

7.2 Early Help Collaboration

Visits from Early Help managers strengthened:

- Joint working
- Referral pathways
- Early intervention
- Support for complex family needs

8. Summary & Future Priorities

Throughout the year, youth services have achieved:

- ✓ Major growth in participation
- ✓ Strong wellbeing outcomes
- ✓ Increased youth leadership
- ✓ High-quality, extensive holiday programmes
- ✓ Expansion of Home Education support
- ✓ Strong multi-agency partnerships
- ✓ Improved safeguarding and safety standards
- ✓ Re-engagement of vulnerable young people

Future Priorities

- Expanding transition support
- Strengthening alternative learning pathways
- Growing youth leadership roles
- Increasing targeted mental health support
- Continued HAF funding
- Continuing partnership development

Conclusion

Ashley Family Hub continues to be a cornerstone of community support, providing safe, inclusive, and enriching opportunities for young people and families in New Milton. We look forward to expanding our offer and strengthening collaboration in the year ahead.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES – WAR MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND
(CHARITY NO. 301891) FOR THE YEAR ENDED - 31 MARCH 2026

Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe with VE Day on 8 May 2025 and finally VJ Day on 2 September 2025 commemorating Japan's formal surrender that took place aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay in 1945.

On Remembrance Day 100-year-old D-Day veteran Jim Justice, a Green Jacket joined us. Rifleman Jim Justice landed in Normandy, his platoon then marched to liberate Bayeux, encountering resistance and hand-to-hand combat. In 2024, Jim visited commemorative events in Normandy with the RBL and had tea with the Royal Family.

In New Milton, we remembered 223 local servicemen who lost their lives in the two world wars - 83 in WWI and 140 in WW2. Their names are on the Memorial.

In total, over 250 local people lost their lives in the two World Wars, including 31 who died as a result of 3 WW2 bombings of the Town.



On Remembrance Sunday, the Last Post was sounded, and Brigadier Paul Jepson President of the New Milton Royal British Legion recited the Exhortation

We then observed 2 minutes' silence from 11 o'clock. After the Reveille, Royal British Legion Colonel Ron Back recited the Kohima. A bagpipe lament was then played by Cllr John Adams.

Wreath Layers numbering around 50 were called forward 2 and 3 at a time. Reverend Jon Westall from St Mary Magdalene Parish Church lead us in prayer.

Parade Marshall Lee Fleming re-assembled the Parade and marched along the high street to the Memorial Hall for a Service of Remembrance that included presentations from students of Arnewood and Durlston Schools, plus Readings from Ballard School and their Senior Chamber Choir performance.



Act of Remembrance VJ80 Anniversary - 2 September 2025

Events on the War Memorial Recreation Ground April 2025 – April 2026

4 May 2025	New Milton Lions VE80 Celebration Event
8 May 2025	Act of Remembrance VE80 Anniversary
6 July 2025	Afternoon of Music featuring Groovemeister
3 August 2025	Afternoon of Music featuring The Wise Guys
2 September 2025	Act of Remembrance VJ80 Anniversary
7 September 2025	Afternoon of Music featuring Total Madness
9 November 2025	Remembrance Sunday Parade & Wreath-Laying
11 November 2025	Armistice Act of Remembrance



Mayor Cllr Alvin Reid with Total Madness on the War Memorial Recreation Ground – 7 Sept

New Forest Association of Local Councils

ANNUAL REVIEW – 2025/2026

At our 29 May 2025 meeting, the Chairman referred to the joint NFDC / NFALC Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) briefing held at Lyndhurst Community Centre on Monday 28 April that was well-attended with 50 representatives from 25 New Forest towns and parishes. We heard that Steve Avery recently left NFNPA, David Illsley being appointed as Interim Head of Planning and Place. We also heard about charity PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling from former NFALC Cycling Rep. The Chairman talked about the New Forest Cultural Council and its three main initiatives plus NFALC support for the CDA in their quest of national recognition of New Forest Commoners as a minority group.

At our AGM on 7 August 2025, Richard Knott of NFDC provided an update on the local Plan Review, and Phase 1 of the Wheelie bin roll out. In the absence of David Illsley, Mary Davies of the NPA updated members on their Local Plan review, and attendance at New Forest Show of Under Secretary of State. Roger Gomm provided an illustrated presentation on the (Terrorism) Protection of Premises) Act 2025. Known as Martyn's Law, this legislation is being put in place following the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. Roger provided an overview, explaining its implications for local parish councils holding events. Designed to improve public safety, Martyn's Law will apply to all events with more than 200 attendees.

At our 22 September 2025 meeting, the Chairman updated members on the Bucklers' Hard Shipyard Trust to survey and excavate the historic shipyard where wooden warships were built for Nelson's navy. Richard Knott from NFDC updated members on Economic Development, Local Plan review, Associated British Ports, Quadrant meetings, LGR and Phase 2 of the Wheelie Bin rollout. Meanwhile, David Illsley from the NPA updated members on Dibden Bay / Solent Gateway 2 proposals and local consultations. David Orme, NFALC Cycling Rep updated members on PEDALL *Pass the Pedal* event held on 27 Sept. David Orme also briefly mentioned the final NF LCWIP document showing a much reduced, route map.

At our 18 November 2025 meeting, David Orme, Cycling Rep provided the latest NFLCWIP updates. Basically, the LCWIP has been officially approved by HCC, and the official consultation period is over. David was really quite gratified. Use of existing low traffic minor roads was taken onboard as NFALC suggested the downside being leisure routes had disappeared, but coastal routes were largely retained. Both Richard Knott-NFDC and David Illsley-NPA provided further updates including changes at the top. Robert Pettigrew from HALC provided an illustrated presentation on Clustering of councils in various ways in different parts of the country, providing a stronger voice, to build coalitions in advance of LGR.

At our 26 January 2026 meeting, The Chairman referred to the inaugural New Forest National Park Transport Summit held on 20 November with around 100 attendees exploring key local transport issues. David Illsley of NPA provided further insight on Farming in Protected Landscapes, Waterside & Solent Gateway 2 proposals and Local Plan review submission to Govt before the end of December. Richard Knott, Chief Operations Officer & Deputy Chief Executive provided updates on Phase 3 rollout & LGR. HALC published their own position paper on LGR, setting out the principles that should inform changes. As a statutory consultee, this was submitted as HALC's official response to Government consultations.

At our 25 March 2026 meeting, the Chairman welcomed Peter Hebard from Brockenhurst & New Forest Flood Action Group who gave an illustrated presentation on managing flooding, drought and climate change effects for the New Forest. Richard Knott, NFDC Chief Operations Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, referred to local government reorganisation Phase 3 waste rollout & Local Plan update.

Local Government Reorganisation The government chose option 1A of the four options that were put forward with 1A being the boundary change option. What that means is there will be one new council that will represent New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire. Another council will cover Southampton, Eastleigh, parts of Test Valley and Waterside parishes with new councils from April 2028:

- **North Hampshire** authority taking in Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor
- **Mid-Hampshire** authority covering most of New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester & East Hants
- **South-West Hampshire** authority taking in Eastleigh, Southampton, newly added Waterside parishes of Totton, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley plus 3 Test Valley parishes
- **South-East Hampshire** authority taking in Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport and Fareham.

David Illsley from the NPA pointed out LGR does not change National Park boundaries. The Chairman confirmed NFALC membership will continue for Waterside parishes remaining within the National Park.

The Chairman also referred to the split of commoners between two new local government authorities, with the Waterside joining a new authority which includes Southampton and Eastleigh with the majority of the New Forest joining with Winchester, East Hampshire and most of Test Valley (see attached).

Split of commoners between two new local government authorities is ‘worst possible outcome’ for the New Forest.

Roz Waters

03 April 2026

The Forest being split under local government reorganisation (LGR) is the “worst possible scenario” for the commoning community, according to those who represent them.

As reported, the area will be divided in two in a shake-up of local councils, with the Waterside joining a new authority which includes Southampton, and the rest of the Forest joining with Winchester, East Hampshire and parts of the Test Valley.



CDA Vice Chairman Keith Mansbridge and Chairman Andrew Parry-Norton

Described by Commoners Defence Association Chairman Andrew Parry-Norton as “the worst possible scenario” for the community, the group is now demanding clarity on how it will be represented on the two separate authorities.

"This is not just a cultural heritage issue, it is also an environmental one," said Mr Parry-Norton. "The entire ecology of the New Forest, which is of global importance, is dependent on the existence of the commoners, and has been for a thousand years.

"To lose the commoners from the New Forest is, in ecological terms, to lose the New Forest itself."

There are fears that when the New Forest district is absorbed into two much larger unitary authorities, the commoners will have no direct representation, and due to their small numbers will have no power to influence as a voting bloc.

However, a decision last year to give New Forest commoners official minority status in the coming years offers a "slim ray of hope".

Commoners were recognised by the UK government as a national minority group under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM).

But due to legislation being updated in five-year cycles, commoners will not be formally named until the next cycle in 2028/29.

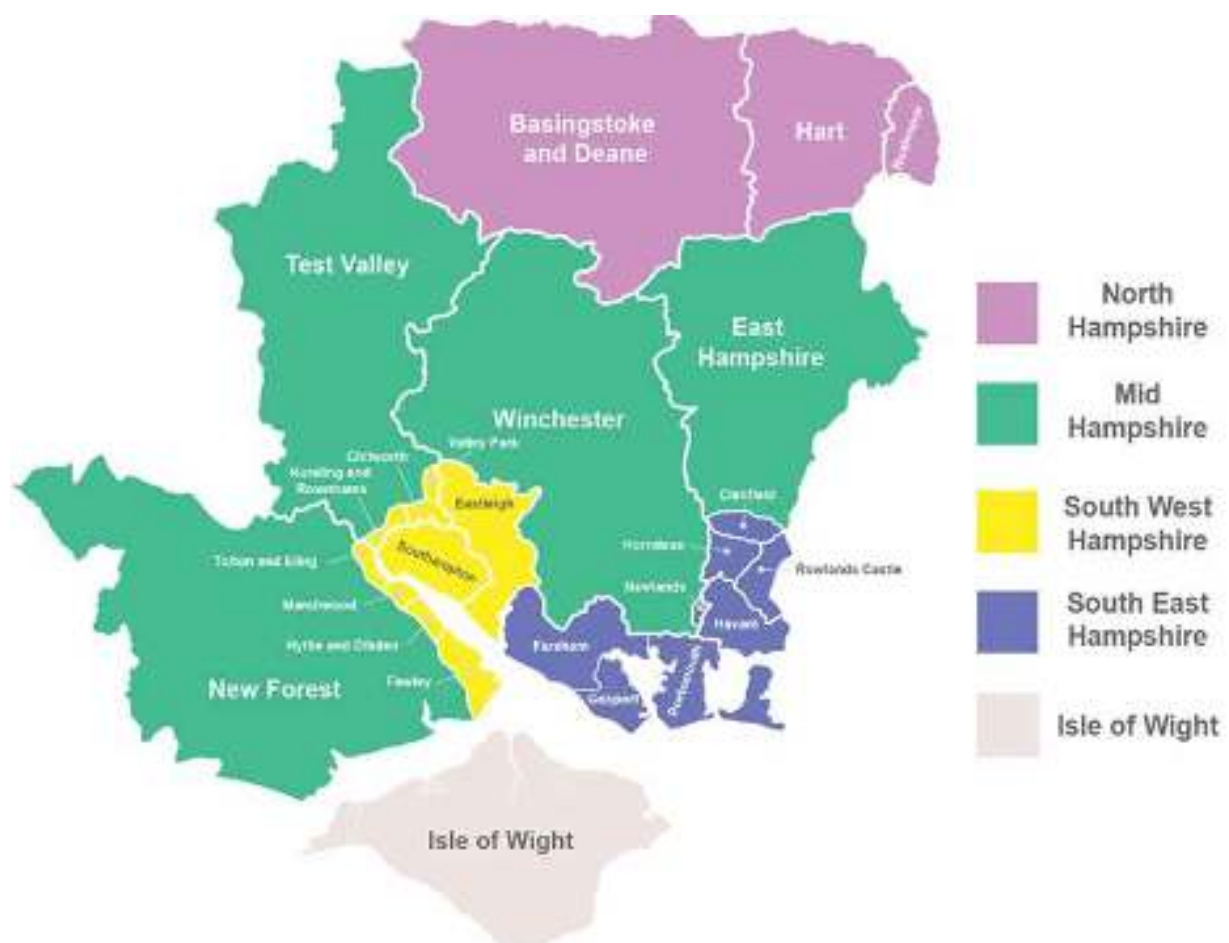


New Forest pony drift

The letter from government stated: "Though not yet a formally named group, the New Forest commoners, like any other minority group in the UK, are now entitled to the rights and protections enshrined in the FCNM.

"It is possible for groups to be protected and considered within the FCNM without a named recognition. This department offers reassurance that the New Forest Commoners culture will be preserved in any future devolution or reorganisation arrangements."

Describing the recognition of commoners' minority status as "welcome" news, New Forest National Park Authority member Brice Stratford said it represented a "slim ray of hope" in the aftermath of news the Forest will be split.



The area will be split into two unitary councils from April 2028 (picture: NFDC)

Mr Stratford said:

"The next thing will be for the government to clarify how exactly commoners' culture will be protected as part of LGR and devolution, and how they will be given meaningful representation on the new unitary authorities and mayoral authority.

"But the recognition they've been granted means they now have a legal obligation to deliver on this."

Mr Parry-Norton echoed this.

“Without the statutory obligation to protect commoners that the FCNM recognition has enshrined, there is no reason or incentive for prospective ‘South-West Hampshire’ unitary authority decision-makers to engage with or prioritise these issues from a Commoning perspective,” he said.

Commoners say that in the last two decades their existence has been threatened by a massive increase in New Forest house prices, which has been heightened by demand for tourist and retirement properties.

It is also hoped that when the FCNM recognition is implemented, this official status could open up new funding opportunities, for commoners and associated organisations alike.



New Forest pony drift (picture: Sally Fear)

New Forest Commoners to be granted national minority status

By Ross Marshall Reporter

30 March 2026

New Forest Commoners are set to be recognised by the UK Government as a national minority, marking a significant step in protecting their historic way of life.

In a letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, officials confirmed that Commoners are entitled to the rights and protections set out under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), even before being formally named in legislation.



Chair of the Commoners Defence Association, Andy Parry-Norton (Image: CDA)

The move means public bodies must consider and safeguard traditional practices in the New Forest, including grazing rights and land management, when making decisions.

Formal recognition is expected to follow in the next five-year FCNM review cycle, and campaigners have welcomed the protections that will come.

Chair of the Commoners Defence Association, Andy Parry-Norton, said: "It's acknowledgment from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government saying that the Commoners have that protection.

"The government are going to afford the protection that the Forest requires which is really fantastic news for us. I'm hoping that this will benefit us after the recent local government reorganisation.

"The New Forest has been split in two and that will allow us to have representation on both the new Southampton council and the new Test Valley council.

"I'm in the process of finding out what that representation will look like. The Waterside being in Southampton has split the Forest so it's really important we have voices in order to protect the Forest with regards to things like housing and how land on the forest is managed."

As previously reported, the New Forest will be split as part of local government reorganisation.

Most of the district will be part of the new mid-Hampshire unitary, with most of Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire.

The Waterside area will join the new Southampton-based south west Hampshire unitary, also including Eastleigh and parts of Test Valley including Nursling and Rownhams.

Andy explained that recognition by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government means New Forest Commoners are now officially acknowledged as a distinct cultural group with a unique way of life.

It doesn't create new laws, but it gives their traditions in the New Forest greater protection and a stronger voice in decisions affecting them.



New Forest Commoners (Image: CDA)