

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCILMINUTES OF NEW MILTON ANNUAL TOWNS' MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 20 APRIL 2026 AT 6.30PM AT NEW MILTON TOWN HALL**CHAIRMAN**

Councillor David Rice-Mundy

TOWN CLERK

G P Flexman

IN ATTENDANCE

11 Town Councillors

18 members of the public

Joanna Hayward (Communications Officer)

Joy Bean (Administration Officer)

Cllr David Rice-Mundy the Vice-Chairman of the Council took the chair for the meeting explaining that the Chairman, Cllr Alvin Reid was absent due to ill-health. The Chairman welcomed Councillors and residents to the Annual Towns Meeting being the 46th to take place since 1979, noting it should have been the 47th but we were unable to hold the Annual Towns' Meeting in 2020 due to prevailing Covid restrictions.

The Annual Towns' Meeting is a public meeting required by statute to be held in the period between 1 March and 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.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllrs J Adams, M Craze, D Hawkins, R Murrow, R A Reid, M Scott-Johns, and D N Tungate.

2. MINUTES

It was

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes were duly signed.

3. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Chairman advised that he would not be reading the full in-depth report, but copies of the Annual Report are available, as attached.

These are some of the highlights from the Annual Report – “A Year in the Life of the Council”.

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

The Chairman mentioned the mayor’s nominated charity – Hampshire & Isle of Wight Air Ambulance – and that the total raised was £2,623.08 across a number of events throughout the year.

The presentation of the cheque would take place later this evening.

Earlier last year, we were pleased to welcome Jamie Anderson, the Headteacher of the Arnewood School, to one of our Town Council Meetings. He shared his vision for the school to become a well thought of and thriving local school and first choice in the area. The Arnewood School was keen to engage with the community including the Town Council, the Youth Trust and the Ashley Hub.

An emerging topic this year was about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) being imposed by central government. The Town Council agreed to submit a response to the Local Government Reorganisation consultation supporting Option 1 put forward by NFDC.

Modifications to the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan included 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.

The Chairman mentioned some town events including Remembrance Sunday, the Carol Service, Afternoon Tea Party and Charity Quiz as well as events organised by the Lions Club. He spoke of the hard work from the Council, officers, community groups and the community in making them all so successful.

He referred to a handwritten letter from pupils of the Eco Club at Durlston School who are leading a project to put up hedgehog signs in the local area reminding everyone to be aware of hedgehogs because too many are being killed on our roads every year.

NMTC have declared Ballard Meadow & Woodland a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) officially from 1 April 2026. It will now be known as Ballard Nature Reserve. Look out for the Official Opening event on 20 June being National Meadow Day.

Finally, the Chairman thanked officers and Estates team for their hard work and dedication.

4. INTRODUCTIONS – CHAIRMEN OF STANDING COMMITTEES

The Chairman introduced fellow Executives, as follows:

Amenities

Cllr G Blunden, Chairman of Amenities Committee, began by thanking the council committee members, as well as the Town Clerk, officers and the Estates and Facilities team who work tirelessly to maintain and improve the many open spaces and facilities for which this council is responsible.

The remit of the Amenities Committee is wide-ranging. It includes the maintenance and improvement of our recreation grounds, parks, open spaces, allotment, footpaths, seats, litter bins, markets, flower displays, Christmas lights, and shelters, as well as oversight of leisure, arts, tourism, and community wellbeing. Over the past year, the committee has focussed on both maintaining what we already have, and investing carefully in projects that will benefit residents now and into the future.

He alluded to CIL projects at Long Meadow, the Town Centre Recreation Ground and Carrick Wood. And upcoming projects including a BMX pump track at Moore Close/Fawcetts Field which was one of the NFDC CIL bids approved this year.

Cllr Blunden also mentioned the improvements at Ballard Lake and Ballard Water Meadow culminating in the Ballard Meadow being declared a Local Nature Reserve.

Finally, he thanked the everyone involved in providing, maintaining and improving our amenities all of whom play a vital role in making New Milton a place we can all be proud of. The full Amenities Committee report is attached.

Planning

Cllr S Clarke, Chairman of the Planning Committee said that the Planning Committee had enjoyed a busy year, with notable applications including the Land East of Brockhills Lane, now known as Danes Park which is well underway although there have been several “sales advertising” applications for the site so far.

The Town Council recommended refusal of applications by BT to install Street Hubs on the High Street. The District Council followed the recommendation, but BT have appealed and this will be considered in the near future.

Bradbeers have applied to make many improvements and elevation changes, the application was granted by District in October and will see a glazed balustrade to the south for a roof terrace element to their restaurant.

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan released a document for comment in February, following hearing that had taken place as part of its examination, and this will centre on Ashley Manor Farm locally.

The HSBC bank building on Station Road has now re-opened as Espino Lounge, part of the Lounges Group, and Cllr Clarke recommended a visit and was very pleased that it opened.

Cllr Clarke also provided an update on the New Forst District Council Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation which looked at Spatial Options and Policy Direction. The results should be available within the draft Local Plan in the autumn.

The Neighbourhood Plan Review is about to progress to Inspection; confirmation of the dates is expected shortly. Finally, he thanked Theresa Elliott and Joy Bean for their hard work and diligence supporting him and the committee. The full report is attached.

Finance & General Purposes

In the absence of Cllr D N Tungate Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP) the vice-chair Cllr A O Sullivan, advised that the role of the F&GP committee is to oversee Council spending, as well as youth services and grant aid.

Cllr O'Sullivan mentioned the budget discussions which began at the end of October last year which culminated in an increase of just 30p per week on New Milton's share of Council Tax on a Band D property of £150.72 pa that compares favourably with other towns.

The Vice-chair also mentioned the adoption of 5 new IT policies in support of NMTC seeking Cyber Essentials Accreditation and spoke about the Youth Work in the town which F&GP oversees covering activities at the Ashley HUB.

The Youth Services Manager welcomed many groups into the Youth & Family Hub, which included many holiday activities funded by HCC via HAF (Holiday Activities Food initiative) allowing under-privileged children to access activities locally during the school holidays.

The Youth Service Manager's Report is attached.

The Vice-chair also reported on Grant Aid - £3,710 was provided to local good causes, and £14,136 was awarded by way of Youth Grants to New Milton Youth Trust who have been carrying out detached youth work. The Lions Club received £3,700 for two events (Whit Event and VJ Day), Artful Scribe had been awarded £500 from the Community Events Budget and finally CAB had been awarded £5,000 under a Service Level Agreement.

Looking forward, there is a CAPEX budget of £250k next year covering 11 projects, as detailed in the attached report.

Finally, Cllr O' Sullivan thanked the committee members and officers for their invaluable contributions over the year.

5. CHEQUE PRESENTATION TO TOWN MAYOR'S NOMINATED CHARITY - HIOWAA

The Chairman presented Emma Stileman a representative of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance with a cheque for £2,623.08.

She thanked the council and in particular Cllr Alvin Reid who had chosen the charity. She said that HIOWAA have recently hired 8 new paramedics all of whom need new flight suits and who are excited to learn and start responding to Hampshire and Isle of Wight's most critically ill and injured patients.

Alongside their pilot, dispatcher and doctor colleagues, our advanced paramedics respond to seriously ill and injured patients 365 days a year – both on the helicopter and as part of the Critical Care Paramedic Response car. These teams are frequently called to cardiac arrest related incidents, road traffic collisions and other serious medical incidents – on average seven times a day.

6. PRESENTATION TO COMMUNITY CHAMPION NOMINEE – JANE TAYLOR

The Chairman invited Jane Taylor one of the 2026 Community Champions nominees to come up to receive her certificate. Jane had been unable to attend the Civic Celebration when the other certificate had been presented. Jane was nominated for her Outstanding work co-ordinating the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal by Lee Fleming. Jane received a round of applause and thanked the Town Council, as well as her colleagues who had worked very hard with her to raise £28k for the RBL locally last year.

7. UPDATES FROM GRANT AID RECIPIENTS 2025/26

The Chairman advised that the recipients of Grant Aid Grants had all been invited to attend the meeting and to provide updates. Happily, they were all here and he invited them in turn to provide their updates.

1. **Artful Scribe**

Sarah Conacher spoke briefly about the Annual Play on Words festival which the Grant Aid had helped to support. It took place in October and involved 18 local groups, 37 events at 23 locations. 91 writers were involved and 2000 people in all attended or took part in the events.

2. **Citizens Advice New Forest**

Neill Young of Citizens Advice New Forest thanked the Town Council for their financial support. He said that the cost-of-living crisis is hitting local people very hard and that they are now tending to need advice on multiple issues including access to Food Banks, applications for benefits including PIP and Carer's Allowance and advice on re-scheduling debts as savings have dwindled due to rising prices. He said that the organisation had helped 600 people in New Milton over the last year and 5,000 across the New Forest. He thanked the team of volunteers who give so much time and dedication to the organisation.

3. Friends of the Indian Memorial

Sue Larking thanked the Town Council for their support this year, She gave some background to the Indian Memorial and to the event which now takes place every year on 10th July. She gave particular thanks to the Estates Manager and his team who give practical assistance in the run up to and on the day itself for the last 10 years/ .

4. Honeypot Children's Charity

John Lay Flurrie spoke about the work that the Honeypot Children's Charity does giving young carers, children between the ages of 5 and 12, ongoing support as well as a break in one of their three Honeypot Houses in Exbury, Wales, and Scotland. This year grant aid had helped 3 young girls in New Milton to attend Exbury for a long weekend including lots of indoor and outdoor activities. The three New Milton children had been referred by Hampshire Social Services and New Milton Junior School, two of them care for their disabled brother and one supports her disabled mum. The children enjoyed their breaks away very much.

5. New Milton Lions Club

Peter Bousfield stated that the New Milton Lions Club has expanded its geographical area as two other club local Lions Clubs have closed down. He said that they have 30 members and there are more in the pipeline. He mentioned that the last two Xmas festivals had unfortunately been cancelled due to projected high winds. He stated that the Lions Community Carnival which is taking place in lieu of the last Xmas event promises to be a big event with a huge carnival featuring a 20ft lion as well as at least 70 stalls. He thanked the Council for their ongoing support.

6. New Milton Music Festival

Simon Crutch spoke about the New Milton Music Festival which has been going for 26 years now. He said that it had started initially as a joint project between the local Rotary Club and New Life Church and had grown to what it is now over the years. He stated that 65 volunteers had been involved this year. The Arnewood School had hosted over 1,000 performances culminating in the Gala Concert which had been attended by several councillors and the Town Clerk. He advised that the Music Festival is achieving its aims of encouraging children to play instruments and get involved with musical performances.

7. New Milton Youth Trust

Laura Myhill spoke on behalf of the NMYT and said they welcomed 94 new members this year giving a total of 275 members.

The detached working had reached 156 young people, and they had visited potential hotspots of ASB in particular. She said that if there were any concerns in any specific areas then contact could be made via Facebook. NMYT had supported 21 young people through gym and fitness projects helping to improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

She mentioned that the trust had been working with young people from other areas as well as New Milton, including Everton, Sway, Highcliffe, Southbourne and Christchurch.

In January they put on their first parent brunch giving the opportunity for parents to work with them as well as their children. She reported that the team has now grown with 5 new volunteers and that staff have been undergoing training. She stated that there is a waiting list of children under 11 wanting to come to the youth club, but the youth club is for 11-year-olds and upwards. Laura thanked NMTC and NMYT continues to provide meaningful youth work in the town

8. Parkinson's UK New Forest

Martin Hall-Patch representing Parkinson's New Forest said it had been set up in 2009 to help people living with Parkinsons disease.

They provide gatherings and activities to help avoid the isolation which is often experienced. They hold two exercise classes per week and offer friendship, guidance and support. Regular exercise is very important for those with Parkinsons' and a recent innovation is a boxing class. Lymington Community Centre holds special film showings for them and after the film there is a lunch. Parkinsons UK New Forest liaise with other charities and groups in order to find their members the help they need. He said that all the work comes at a price and thanked the Council for their grant.

The Chairman thanked all groups for their reports and the great work that they do in the town.

8. QUESTIONS

There were no questions from local residents, but one member of the public took the opportunity to seek further support for the New Milton Hub (incorporating the Memorial Hall), suggesting the Town Council could contribute more funds to assist in replacing a boiler.

It was suggested NMTC budget £10k a year for the Memorial Hall to call on if needed. The comments were noted by Cllrs Blunden and O' Sullivan. Another member of the public bemoaned the name change to the Hub, stating that it should continue to be known as the Memorial Hall. A third member of the public stated the Hall is still known as the Memorial Hall, with the Memorial Centre building as a whole now known as the Hub.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions.

9. NEXT MEETING - To be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and there being no further business to discuss, closed the Meeting at 7.45pm.

Chairman _____

Date _____

Distribution: Town Councillors; District Councillors; County Councillors; New Milton Library; Press; Alan Watson – FOCUS & NMRA and New Milton Police