

MILFORD-ON-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

The Old Clock House ~ 22 High Street ~ Milford-on-Sea ~ Hampshire ~ SO41 0QD



Minutes of the

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH HALL

On Wednesday 28th May 2025 at 7.30pm

MEMBERS

Mr. Bob Bishop	p	Mrs. Christine Hopkins	p	Mrs. Susan Pepper	p
Mr. Bernard Bennett	p	Ms. Anne Cullen	p	Mr. Ian Bliss	
Mrs. Patricia Banks	p	Mr. Donald Darbshire	p		
Mr. Gary Fox	p	Mr. David Royle	p		

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Graham Wells (Parish Clerk), County Cllr Carpenter & 41 members of the public.

Parish Council Chair Cllr Bernie Bennett welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

Each attending Cllr introduced themselves along with both Clerks.

1. APLOGIES: Mr. Ian Bliss

2. REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:

The Chair thanked Councillors Sue Whitlock, Peter Jennions and Kenneth Cameron for all their years of service to the Parish Council and welcomed new Councillor Gary Fox. He also thanked the current Councillors, Office Staff, District and County Councillors and all the volunteers for their help during what had been a very busy year.

The Chair highlighted several achievements during 2024/25 which included the purchase of the entire Community Meadow, making the Chris Walford Pavilion more energy efficient, arranging a lease with the Bowls Club and supporting various local organisations financially.

He reported that Councillors had also been very active with committees and working groups, on other issues such as the Hurst Spit to Lyminster project, the Christchurch Bay project, National Park and District meetings and producing policies, enabling the Council to comply to modern practices.

The Chair reported that there were significant changes and challenges ahead, including the reorganisation of local authorities. The ongoing the priority for the council is to improve the facilities for residents and visitors alike, taking into account environmental, planning, financial responsibility, growth and sustainability. He suggested residents engage with the Parish Council on future matters of importance.

With the agreement of members, Cllr Bennett invited County Cllr Carpenter to give her report.

5. REPORT FROM HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR:

County Councillor Fran Carpenter reported that she had recently attended two other annual parish meetings and that the Milford meeting had the largest attendance.

She reported that the decision on parking along Salt Grass Lane and New Lane had been made, and that the decision was likely to be implemented in the late summer or autumn.

There had been various meetings at County to discuss the local authority's reorganisation, and a proposal was due to be sent to central government later in the year. She suggested that much of the detail was still unknown. However, there would be an opportunity for the public to comment on this issue.

Q. A member of the public asked if it were a forgone conclusion the District Council would join with other authorities.

A. Cllr Carpenter reported that different options on how Unitary Authorities might be formed was currently under discussion, but it was hoped that the New Forest would keep its distinctiveness.

Cllr Bennett then invited Cllr Banks, Chair of the Planning Committee, to give her report.

3. REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING:

Cllr Banks reported that the Parish Council was only a consultee when it came to its input towards planning applications and that it was the District Council who were the deciding authority.

She reported that the Parish Councillors have five different Planning Application Requirements, (known as PAR's) options to choose from and Councillor Banks explained the differences between them.

Cllr Banks reported that the Planning Committee had discussed 71 applications in the last year as well as a further 36 tree work applications.

Cllr Banks reported that the development north of Manor Road would be known as "Swallowfields", and that the Parish Council were expecting a full application shortly. She emphasised that the Parish Council would be insisting that certain conditions were in place prior to any work on the land.

Cllr Bennett invited Cllr Royle, the Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee, to give his report.

4. REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE:

Cllr Royle gave an outline of the Finance Committee, this included responsibility for both expenditure and capital budgets. Cllr Royle reported that the governance on financial transactions was in place to protect taxpayers' money from being abused. This included two Councillors signing each invoice, the Clerk submitting monthly reports to all Councillors which were scrutinised at every parish meeting. Each month Cllr Royle would then cross reference the bank statements with the expenditure reports and sign to confirm that all transactions were accounted for. He reported that there was also an independent internal and external audit undertaken at the end of every financial year.

Cllr Royle reported that the purchase of the entire Community Meadow in such a short time frame had operated successfully and the community had raised £114,500 to bid for the land, which had been accepted.

Cllr Royle reported that the expenditure budget had risen from 24/25 to 25/25 by £19k due to areas outside the Parish Councils control, such as employers' national insurance increases, national pay awards and inflation.

Item 5 previously discussed

6. REPORTS FROM NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

There were no District Councillors in attendance and no prior reports had been received.

Cllr Bennett invited Cllr Cullen to give a report on devolution.

7. INFORMATION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION / DEVOLUTION:

Cllr Cullen reported that several Councillors had attended the briefing by NFDC in April and that NFDC's proposals needed to be submitted to Central Government between September and December 2025. Currently there are discussions of forming between 3 and 5 unitary authorities, with the Isle of Wight possibly being an authority in its own right. Cllr Cullen reported that this change would mean all the District and Borough Councils, including the possibility that NFDC would be dissolved, which may take place anywhere in 2027 or 2028.

Cllr Cullen suggested that this is likely to have an impact on Town and Parish Councils as the services NFDC provide would need to be taken up by another authority. She reported that NFDC were going to review its community asset register and the process of discussing this with towns and parishes could start this year.

Cllr Cullen reported that the planning process might change with Towns and Parishes no longer giving suggested recommendations.

Cllr Cullen concluded her report by saying that much of the process is still unknown. However, it is envisaged that there will be public consultations throughout the process.

7. ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual report had been circulated prior to the start of the meeting and Cllr Bennett suggested questions on the report should be included in the next agenda item.

8. QUESTIONS OR MATTERS RAISED BY THE ELECTORS OF THE PARISH

Q1. The waste bins on the Village Greens are too small and often overflow, what can be done?

The Clerk reported that the cost to empty bins on Parish Council land had increased dramatically over the last two years and if nothing changed then this would increase again next year. He reported that discussions were being held with NFDC to consider larger bins, reducing the number of smaller bins and relocate bins that are in better areas for public convenience and NFDC collection.

Q2. The cost of employment has risen each year, who do you employ?

The Chair of Finance reported that the budget is set in November each year and at the time there were four employees. He reported that the annual salary increase, employers' national insurance and employers pension levels are all out of the Parish Councils control. He also reported the Parish Council also must budget for inflationary increases to purchase materials for repairs, health and safety etc.

The Chair reported that currently the council are working to address the recent resignations of its ground staff.

Q3. Are the Parish Council taking seriously the planning application to replace the car wash on Keyhaven Road?

Cllr Banks reported that Parish Councillors were elected to listen to and represent the public, they would consult all the relevant documentation on a planning application prior to taking a recommendation vote.

Q4. Is there a covenant on the Community Meadow that states it cannot be sold?

The Chair reported that the land now belonged to the Parish Council, and it would remain so for the benefit of the community for as long as the Parish Council deemed it to be in the best interests of the community. There was no envisaged scenario where it would ever be sold.

Q5. *What is the long-term plan for the Community Meadow?*

Cllr Pepper reported that a working group had been formed that would be looking at a long-term plan for the Meadow. This group would be obtaining information and guidance from local experts so that the Parish Council can make informed decisions on its future. She suggested it would remain a tranquil site, but as yet no decisions had been made. Cllr Pepper reported that consideration would be given to the safety of children and the general public, environmental issues, financial restraints and the time of year to undertake any planned work.

Q6. *If land became available, such as Sturt Pond, when NFDC relinquish their assets would the Parish Council take on its management?*

The Chair suggested that the Parish Council would have to seriously think about committing to additional assets, and are aware of the pressure it might be under to retain facilities within the community.

Q7. *Should the Parish Council be committing to a Neighbourhood Plan?*

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had twice in the last 12 years considered a neighbourhood plan. However, the cost, timescale and limited resources had meant that the council decided on both occasions not to pursue this option.

Q8. *Would the Parish Council support forming a Keyhaven Harbour Authority which could raise funds each year that could be used to repair Hurst Spit?*

Cllr Banks suggested this would be well worth exploring outside this meeting.

Q9. *Do volunteers still play an active part for the Parish Council?*

The Clerk reported that both the Milford Conservation Volunteers and the Meadow Gardeners are still involved by assisting the Parish Council with numerous tasks every month.

Q10. *Should the Parish Council take over the running of the Newcomers Event?*

Cllr Pepper suggested it was unfortunate that this year's event did not take place and hoped it could be back either later in the year or in 2026.

The Chair of the meeting thanked everyone for attending and **CLOSED** the meeting at 8.45pm.

..... Chair

..... Date