

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting, New Mills
10th May, 2022 at 7pm
New Mills Town Hall**

The meeting was attended by 35 members of the public

1. To appoint a chair, if the Chairman of the Council is not present

Cllr. David Lamb, newly appointed Chair of New Mills Town Council, was the chair of the meeting. Note that the chair left the meeting on three occasions to take phone calls and speak with Cllr Frost.

2. To appoint a minute taker

Minutes taken by Cllr. Patty Doran. Please note, at times it was difficult to minute the meeting as people were talking over each other. Additionally, the agenda was not followed, nor the order of the NMTC Report (Item 4). For readability, minutes have been recorded to reflect the agenda and the NMTC Report, not the order that points were raised in the meeting.

3. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 26th May 2021 to be a true and correct record

These minutes were agreed.

4. Overview of NMTC activities during 2021/22

Presented by Cllr. Paul Frost.

- i. **COVID Situation**
All NMTC staff have worked through the pandemic with minimal absence. Covid has impacted on the Town Hall and Heritage & Info Centre access, reducing both usage and revenue. *However*, use of the Hall is now growing. The Heritage Centre is to reopen at the end of May in High Lea Park.
- ii. **Councillor availability**
1 Councillor resigned during the year. The Co-option process is underway to resource vacancies, and a very small number of people have expressed an interest to become Councillors.
- iii. **Employee productivity**
The staff budget has been controlled without impacting on delivery. Currently all posts are resourced.
- iv. **Asset productivity**
Town hall cottage refurbished and let on a long term basis to a family. Generating additional budgeted revenue for NMTC. High Lee Hall upper accommodation has been let to a domestic tenant on a long term basis.
- v. **Precept Charge**
A very difficult but necessary decision was made to substantially increase the precept this year. This has been driven by previous years increases falling short of requirements and opening up a gap and financial risk. It is believed this year's increase is a "one off" correction and very unlikely to be repeated.

- vi. **Goyt Valley House**
NMTC challenged the closure of this asset to our community and supported the campaign to maintain this home. The council has previously formally objected by letter to Government.
- vii. **Heritage Centre**
The continued commitment to support the Heritage Centre has been “hard wired” by its relocation to High Lee Hall. This ensures its long term financial stability and creates an opportunity to expand its facilities, displays, and revenue stream. The relocation and communication of intentions has been impaired by confidential complex negotiations via solicitors.
- viii. **Volunteer Centre**
Continued provision of the premises at a reasonable cost to assist the town volunteer group.
- ix. **New Memorial**
A generous local business man provided 3 memorial stones with the names of the fallen in World War 2. The council gratefully received these plaques and arranged their fitment to 3 feature stones adjacent to the High Lee memorial park. These were unveiled and blessed on Remembrance Sunday.
- x. **Torrs access**
The footway near the “Chain horse” house is being made even and resurfaced to reduce the likelihood of a slip trip and fall, and aid disability access.
- xi. **High Lee Hall**
The Hall is being refurbished and enhanced whilst still retaining its original features. Several “non original” features have been removed and preparations are ongoing to complete the upgrade in readiness to reopen as the new Heritage Centre.
- xii. **Picker & Mill fields purchase**
NMTC sought to purchase the picker from its current owner to create a civic amenity and wildlife park for the perpetual benefit of the residents. This would have been enabled by a long term public loan at a minimal interest rate. However, an agreed purchase price could not be achieved and at present discussion with the owner has ceased.
- xiii. **Plant and Equipment**
Much equipment inc Tractor Mower have been replaced this year.
- xiv. **New Mills Junior Football Club**
NMTC has supported the clubs access of funding to renew and enhance the field drains on the pitch at Ollersett. This includes the provision of a barrier fitted at the clubs expense to protect the pitch. This enables the pitch to remain drained and usable FOR ALL.
- xv. **Events**
NMTC has supported numerous events over the year when possible e.g. The remembrance day event, service, march and wreath laying; Several events in High Lee Park.
- xvi. **Conclusion**
A difficult year for the town and its residents including financial pressures health threats. However, the town is emerging from the pandemic. The financial base of the council is sound. The Heritage Centre is backed financially long term and has scope to expand. High Lee Hall will be accessed enjoyed by the residents. The Environment Committee is

up and running enabling focus on our Climate Emergency response going forward. Arrangements are in place and funded to deal with the blight of Ash die back which will destroy approx 90% of our Ash tree population. They will be removed on a priority basis and replaced. All the councils fixed assets are in use and benefiting the town.

5. To report on members attendance at New Mills Council meetings only

Attendance record:

David Aris-Sutton 69%; Ray Atkins 75%; Michelle Bancroft 88%; Patty Doran 100%; Lance Dawson 75%; Paul Frost 94%; Aaron Jones 66%; David Lamb 94%; Paul Williams 70%.

6. Reports from DCC representatives

Cllr. Anne Clarke reported on her first year of being a DCC councillor.

- Attended the majority of New Mills Town Council meetings
- Spoken out and campaigned against this decision to close Goyt House
- Enjoyed attending local events in New Mills and support a number of New Mills community groups via the Members Community Leadership Fund
- Road traffic issues have been the main issues raised by residents this year and help has been provided through liaising with highways to gain some improvements.
- Surgeries have been held in New Mills, Rowarth and Hague Bar
- Thanked all those who have offered advice and support over the last twelve months and Cllr. Clarke expressed that she look forward to working with the town in the future.

7. Reports from HPBC representatives

Cllr. Lance Dowson reported:

- COVID fund council tax rebates are being processed.
- Local plan currently being developed. Includes a five-year housing plan.
- Also carrying planning and licensing roles within HPBC.
- Locally represents the area as best as possible. Including linking with health and education services. Also advocating for individuals with various needs.
- Cllr. Dowson spoke about the upset caused by comments on Facebook. Agrees that there is a toxic nature around the Town Council and understands why people don't want to stand for council.

8. Report from local charity/voluntary organisations

New Mills Festival will be held from 9th to 25th September this year. Two weeks of music, arts and community events. Including the lantern procession.

The One World Festival will be taking place for the first since 2019 on 2nd July. Theme: reconnect – with your town, community world. Thanks for the support.

New Mills Carnival will be on the 11th June. The theme is superheroes

Torr's Hydro AGM is at the end of May, profits over £10,000 this year. Last year there was quite a bit of work carried out on the plant.

Thornsett Band is practising again, on Mondays.

New Mills Community Orchard reported another successful year.

9. To consider any other New Mills Parish matters that may be brought forward by New electorate or members of the public present

a. New Mills Heritage and Information Centre

A petition was presented with 528 signatures asking to stop the move in location of New Mills Heritage and Information Centre. The Chair refused to accept the petition, stating he was attending as a resident and did not need to accept it on behalf of the council

Comments from public:

- It was noted that in the constitution name is 'New Mills Heritage and Information Centre' (NMHIC) and that it is essential that the purpose of the centre is remembered.
- Brian Stanway (landlord of the Rock Mill Lane site) asked why he never received a response to a letter offering a discussion and reduced rent. Resident said that he had a FOI request response that said the Council never had any letter.
- There were several comments about the cost of the move. It was suggested that the costs should be taking into account the money recently put into refurbishment of the Rock Mill Lane site, loss of rental income from High Peak Community Arts, loss of income from the top floor of High Lea Hall, staff time moving and renovating the new site, staffing costs to run the new site.
- It was asked why have these costs not been planned, published and put to the public for consultation?
- Cllr. Lamb said that the loss of income from no longer having rent from HPCA, and any compensation was included in the budget to the NMHIC.
- Concern expressed about the lack of a project plan for the NMHIC move.
- It was noted that the last NMHIC committee meeting was March 2019.
- Questions were asked about the lack of consultation, including with the existing volunteers, since 2016 when the NMHIC move was first proposed.

b. Upstairs accommodation at High Lea Hall

Comments from public:

- Where was the vacancy at High Lea Hall advertised? How much was the rental? What process was followed? Also issues about security, will the tenant have sole access to the hall? Questions around the standard of the property as a residential property, in particular the specific standards around a residential property on top of a commercial property. There will need to be a separate security system for the heritage centre and the residential property.
- Cllr. Dowson reported that no planning permission was needed to change the top from commercial to residential. Also reported that no planning permission was needed for the Grade 2 listed building, as there is no structural changes.

c. Communication with New Mills Parish Council

Comments from public:

- Communication between residents of New Mills and Council and the Clerk is not working. For example, not having responses to communication to the Council, why is this not happening?
- Cllr. Frost noted that this has been raised before and needs addressing.
- Suggested that the council needs a way to communicate.
- All correspondence should be included in the agenda under correspondence.

- Can the meetings be conducted on Zoom in general? Reply: Cannot for legal reasons. But it is possible that meetings can be streamed, however the infrastructure isn't in place at present.
- Another comment that the minutes are generally thin. Request that all supporting documents are also supplied a week in advance.

d. Other comments

Comments from public:

- Concern about the amount of content in Part Two of council meetings. Finances are in the public interest.
- There was a general call for respect, at the current meeting and in the council meetings and communication generally.
- Precept – residents used to get information about the costs of the council with the council tax bill, suggestion that not enough information is currently provided.
- There was a request to provide an overview of finances with the minutes for the annual parish meeting.
- Disappointment was expressed about the closure of Goyt Valley House
- A question was asked about what has the council done since declaring a climate emergency. Referred to the environment and energy committee chaired by Cllr. Williams.

At times throughout the meeting there was abusive shouting, many people talking over one another, and what was referred to at the end of the meeting by one resident as shambles. At the end of the meeting there were several comments about the disorder and lack of respect experienced throughout the meeting.

Final questions were asked about: How many complaints has the council has received? How many councillors have resigned? And, how many have been women?

It was reiterated by a member of the public that meetings should be run respectfully and politely. There was concern that the council is not representing the town.

The chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.