

## **ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2017** **F&GP Committee – Cllr A D O’Sullivan**

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 Government proposals affecting finances.

Budget discussions began in October 2016 and the 2017/18 precept was recommended by F&GP on 5 December 2016 in the sum of £715,564. This was subsequently endorsed and officially adopted by the Town Council at its meeting on 19 December, 2016. New Milton remains 10<sup>th</sup> out of 37 local councils in regard to Band D tax in the New Forest.

During the year, there were repeated discussions concerning Hampshire Devolution, DCLG “capping” proposals for local councils together with local council tax referendum principles. F&GP considered all of these proposals and made suitable representations. The *status quo* prevailed and no proposals were adopted by Government.

F&GP also has a remit for overseeing Youth Work in the town. Following the opening of the Skate-park in 2015 and following closure of the Phoenix Youth Centre by Hampshire County Council, the Town Council appointed an experienced Youth Co-ordinator to work directly with young people in partnership with Youth Workers, Street Pastors and the Police. The Youth Co-ordinator will help in the planning, delivering and evaluation of youth activities and services. One of the key tasks is to work directly with young people and organisations in the planning and delivery of a replacement youth centre in order to provide and develop a suitable facility for young people within the town.

The recently-appointed Youth Co-ordinator will assist with the development of a youth council, possibly in association with the Town Council, which will encourage partnerships with schools, sports clubs, uniformed groups and other statutory agencies. This youth council will also have a voice on issues that affect young people in the community. Key to success will be establishing and maintaining relationships with young people, working closely with them, promoting their needs in the community whilst also developing services and support to special needs groups.

The Town Council uses a revised Risk Assessment software program to help identify and address potential individual risks. The program covers 50 risk areas from allotments to web-sites and identifies over 300 potential risks facing town councils. As a result, an Action Plan was drawn up detailing potential risks associated with finding an alternative youth facility to the Phoenix Centre, maintaining stock fencing in conjunction with new grazing licensing under Higher Level Stewardship schemes and ensuring adequate reserves to cover Business Rates relating to the Weekly Market if required

Administration of the Grant Aid budget is also the responsibility of this Committee and last financial year 5 grants amounting to £5,000 were awarded plus £13,000 for Youth Work projects including £2,200 to Arnewood School Summer Reach project providing activities in the summer holidays for vulnerable pupils, hoping to fill a gap left by the closure of the Phoenix Centre; £1,800 to Forest Arts towards My Town, My Future, that includes a family and young person project on the Recreation Ground plus creating a new history archive called Today’s Heritage recording modern life; plus £8,288 to ASBOC for youth activities at the Empire Skate café on the Recreation Ground through employment of qualified youth workers with the café opening 3 nights per week from 5pm to 8pm plus Saturdays from 12 noon to 3.00pm for young people aged 12-25.

As noted above, the F&GP remit is both wide and varied. As we reach the end of this municipal year, I would like to thank all my colleagues and staff for their contribution.