

**STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**  
held on Thursday 13th June 2024 at 7.15pm in The Council Chamber

Present:

Cllr P Batstone – Vice Chair

Cllr N Dobson

Cllr A Donaldson

Cllr C Fraser

Cllr M Jones

Cllr H Lacey - Chair

Cllr D Mantock

Cllr P Marks

Cllr J Matthews

In Attendance: K Squire (Town Clerk), Dorset Councillor C Jones, and L Plumridge (Assistant Town Clerk, by Zoom)

Members of the public: 1

Minute  
No.

24/25/033

**PUBLIC SESSION**

A member of the public requested an update on Butts Pond Meadows. Correspondence received regarding this will be raised under 24/25/052.

Dorset Council Carole Jones Report

- Reminded the Council she had microphone and outdoor speakers if the Council want to borrow these for outdoor events.
- Cllr Jones is now the lead on Adult Health at Dorset Council, the group are working on a project identifying areas for extra care 24/7 accommodation.
- Dorset Council have just been awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the national Top Council Awards 2023.
- Drovers and The Gavel – had received residents' requests for the adoption of roads to Dorset Council. She advised this process needs to be instigated by Taylor Wimpey. She advised enquiries should be made directly to Taylor Wimpey.
- Flood engineers have been investigating areas in Chapel Lane Bagber and Orchard Close
- There are problems with parking at Yewstock School where those picking up students are continually parking on the corners of Thomas Hardy Close which restricts vision. The Police educating drivers is key to providing a solution.
- One of the Highways Officers has been unwell for some time which has caused some internal staff challenges.

24/25/034 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Cllr J Rose.  
The apologies were accepted by the members present.

24/25/035 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

No interests were declared and no written requests for dispensation had been received.

24/25/036 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

The minutes of the previous Town Council meeting held on Annual Town Council meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 Extra Ordinary Town Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 having been circulated and published prior to the meeting, were taken as read and approved for signature by the Chair as a true and correct record.

24/25/037 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Planning & Environment Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> May:

**PENNY STREET HIGHWAY ISSUES**

The Committee resolved to recommend sending the petition received from residents of Penny



**Street to Dorset Council Highways Department  
with a letter of support.**

**POLICE TRIAL "SLOW DOWN INITIATIVE"**  
**The Committee resolved to recommend  
proceeding with a trial of the "Slow Down  
Initiative" in various locations in the town.**

**The Council resolved to approve the recommendations from the committee.**

24/25/038

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**Application No: P/VOC/2024/02400**

**Location:** Banbury Cross Boarding Kennels And Cattery Angers Lane  
Fiddleford Dorset DT10 2BY

**Proposal:** Erect 2 No dwellings, create new vehicular access with brick  
piers, sliding metal gate and 1.8m high boundary wall. Create 4  
no parking spaces (with variation of condition 2 of planning  
permission P/VOC/2024/00263 to amend approved plans (unit b))

**Observations: No Objections.**

**Application No: P/PAAC/2024/02768**

**Location:** Former Agricultural Building Puxey Lane Puxey

**Proposal:** Change of use and conversion of agricultural building to form 1no. dwellin (use class  
C3)

**Observations: No Objections.**

**Application No: P/HOU/2024/02901**

**Location:** Lower Bagber Farm Pentridge Lane Bagber DT10 2EX Proposal: Proposed single  
storey side extension.

**Observations: No Objections.**

**Application No: P/FUL/2024/02787**

**Location:** Lower Bagber Farm Yard Pentridge Lane Bagber

**Proposal:** Erect extensions to form cover over concrete yards.

**Observations: No Objections.**

24/25/039

**INSURANCE POLICY**

**The Council resolved to approve the insurance cover offer to sign up for 3 years with Aviva  
using James Hallam at a cost of £12,172.15 for 2024/25.**

24/25/040

**INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT JANUARY TO MARCH 2024 AND YEAR END PROCEDURES**

**The Council resolved to approve the internal audit report January to March 2024 and year  
end procedures.**

The Council passed on thanks to the Town Clerk for her hard work.

24/25/041

**ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/24**

**The Council resolved to approve the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24.**

The auditor will provide a letter of explanation for the highlighted oversight.

24/25/042

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT SECTION 1 2023/2024**

**The Council resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement Section 1 2023/24.**

24/25/043

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT SECTION 2 2023/2024**

**The Council resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement Section 2 2023/24.**



- 24/25/044 **DATES FOR THE NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023/24**  
The Council resolved to approve the list of dates between 17<sup>th</sup> June – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- 24/25/045 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH EXTERNAL AUDITORS BDO LLP**  
Members of the Council confirmed they had no conflict of interests with the External Auditors BDO LLP.
- 24/25/046 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024 FINANCIAL MATTERS**
- ii. Income and Expenditure Report as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**  
The committee resolved to approve the income and expenditure report as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- iii. Approve Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**  
The committee resolved to approve the balance sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- TO RECEIVE INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT.**  
The committee resolved to approve the interim audit report and noted the recommendations.
- TO REVIEW AND READOPT FINANCIAL REGULATIONS.**  
Having been previously circulated the committee reviewed the document and resolved to readopt the Financial Regulations for Sturminster Newton Town Council 23/24
- TO REVIEW AND ADOPT FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROLS.**  
Having been previously circulated the committee reviewed the document and resolved to readopt the Financial Risk Management and Internal Controls for Sturminster Newton Town Council 23/24.
- The Council resolved to approve the recommendations of the Finance & Personnel Committee.**
- 24/25/047 **REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT 2023/2024**  
The Council considered the scope of works of the Internal Auditor and resolved to approve this as effective for 2023/2024.
- 24/25/048 **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2024/2025**  
The Council resolved to reappoint Lighteatouch as the Internal Auditor for 2024/2025.
- 24/25/049 **REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE**  
The Council resolved to approve the revised terms of reference for the Finance & Policy committee.  
The Council agreed that an agenda item be scheduled for the Staffing subcommittee to report to the Finance & Policy committee at alternate committee meetings.
- 24/25/050 **APPROVE PAYMENTS OVER £2000**  
There were no payments over £2000 to consider.
- 24/25/051 **DEFIBRILLATOR AT BROAD OAK**  
The Council resolved to approve taking responsibility for the maintenance of the defibrillator at Broad Oak but that checks and report submissions should be undertaken by a responsible resident in Broad Oak.



24/25/052 **CORRESPONDENCE**

Butts Pond Meadows – the Clerk read out correspondence from Dorset Council's Senior Ranger, Graham Stanley. A copy is attached to these minutes.

24/25/053 **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk had no additional matters to report.

24/25/054 **TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor had attended the following:

- On 6<sup>th</sup> June she attended the Raising of the Flag of Peace, D-Day Civic Service and the Beacon Lighting in the Railway Gardens, which was very well attended.
- Stour Connect Youth Mental Health Day.

24/25/055 **INFORMATION FROM MEMBERS**

*Cllr Batsone* – had attended an anti-terrorist training session and suggested the Council purchase severe bleeding first aid kits for the town.

The Literary Festival was going well with good attendance.

*Cllr Mantock* – reported on feedback she had received regarding social media information issued relating to D-Day activities.

*Cllr Lacey* – had again reported the street light problems at The Row.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.39 pm

Approved on

11 July 2024

Chairman's Signature



**Agenda Item 24/25/052**

Re the early mowing of Butts Pond,

It was my intention and indeed request to the contractor have Butts Pond meadows cut before the end of April, to help reduce the vigour of the meadowsweet, docks and nettles that have been making the haylage cut taken in late August unpalatable for both the farmer and their livestock. Having spoken to the farmer, he was no longer keen on having the bales as there was not much edible grass in it.. predominantly the woody stems of these 3 species in particular.

As the weather and ground conditions did not allow any farmer or any nature reserve manager anywhere in the country to get on to land until the first week of May, I took the decision to still have the meadows cut at the earliest opportunity.

It is a well-known fact that an early cut can help perennial wildflower species flourish. This, with the follow up overseeding that we will carry out after the summer cut will improve the diversity.

People tend to be rather nervous about mowing. It can be difficult to cut a meadow when you see all sorts of wildlife still enjoying it. Wildflowers are resilient and low growing - they have basal rosettes that are not cut, and it keeps the sward open and surrounding grasses under control. Leave cutting until too late and the grass will form an impenetrable thatch that the wildflowers cannot compete with.

Regarding the impact of the cutting on the GCN population, my time working for what was called the Herpetological Conservation Trust, (now called Amphibian and Reptile Conservation) along with the 15 years of managing Butts Pond meadows has given me a good understanding of what can be done and when, with no impact. Purposeful margins of uncut vegetation were left around the ditches and ponds, which along with the water and the dense hedgerows, is where the GCN's would have been.

I'm happy to say that this has prompted both Natural England and Dorset Wildlife Trust to get in touch. Both understand the complexities of the competing priorities of nature reserve management, including the difficulties of communicating management decisions. DWT, with the aid of volunteers, will be conducting surveys again. From my own and my teams' observations, there is still a healthy population of all newt species here.

The extension of the nature reserve into the Market fields with those proposed meadows and ponds being appropriately managed will also no doubt help the population thrive as much as it can do, being otherwise surrounded by housing.

In the long term, however drastic it may have looked to the casual observer on day 1, this work will be of a benefit.

Kind regards

**Graham Stanley**  
**Senior Ranger (North)**



