STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

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ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING
Thursday 30 April 2025
7.30pm in the Council Chamber

1. **Welcome and Introductions.**
   The Mayor welcomed the 26 people in attendance.

2. **To approve and sign the minutes of the Annual Town Public Meeting held on 25 April 2024.**
   The minutes were agreed and signed by the Mayor Cllr Helen Lacey as a true and correct record.

3. **Community Star Awards.**
   The Mayor presented Community Star Awards to recognise outstanding service to:
   Kim Voisey – to recognise outstanding contribution to improving Community and Family Life for many people in Sturminster Newton.
   Caroline & Robin Dyer – to recognise outstanding service and dedication to young people in Sturminster Newton through Guide & Brownie groups.
   Trevor Legg – to recognise outstanding service and unfailing dedication to Civic & Remembrance events.
   Matthew Billingsley – to recognise outstanding contributions to the enhancement of Community life in Sturminster Newton.
   Pete Hawkins – to recognise outstanding dedication to the Community of Sturminster Newton in promoting events and being an all round Community Star.
   Chris Spackman – to recognise outstanding service and dedication to supporting many aspects of Community Life in Sturminster Newton. (presented at Car Meet on Saturday 3 May 2025).

4. **Presentation from Local Community Groups.**
   The following Local Community Groups had been given grants from Sturminster Newton Town Council this year :
   Read Easy – to help non-readers to learn and be able to access more from this.
   Sturminster Newton Literary Festival – the grant had paid for advertising, which publicised the event to a bigger audience.

5. **Sturminster Newton Football Club (Youth Section)** – new goals were purchased with the grant awarded. There are now 130 young people at the club.
   Tots & Toast – this group meet every Tuesday during term time, and the grant will buy more craft materials and toys.
   SNADS – with the grant they have been able to purchase a new Lighting Board.

Mayors Report for 24/25

New Play Equipment

New Play Equipment has been installed at both Rixon Rec and Ricketts Lane. The focus is on maximum play value. This is being well used, and we have had good feedback from users of both sites. Play equipment is very expensive so we are now building up reserves for other smaller play areas within the town.

New Pathway at Ricketts Lane

Hopefully you will have seen the lovely new pathway at Ricketts Lane, the spoil from the replacement was used to create an observation area at the back of the recreation ground which we have planted up with wildflowers. We have also added several new bird and bat boxes in the grounds too.

Town Clock

The Town Clock had some much-needed TLC and now is keeping time very well.

The Market Column

Repairs were made to the Market Column lighting at the bottom of the Railway Gardens.

Additional Speed Indicator Device

We have ordered an additional speed indicator device which will be rotated around sites in the town. Existing sites are on Bath Road, Manston Road and Rolls Mill, the additional sites are on Glue Hill and by the Chapel on the A357. Speed Indicators have good results at slowing down traffic and a speed survey showed that these two sites will potentially benefit from the installation. As soon as these are delivered and calibrated by Dorset Council, we will add the new sites to the rota.

Silent Soldier – Tommy 2

Our original Town Silent Soldier had been vandalised and over the course of time had become in need of attention. A big thankyou to James Smith from Muddy Waters Metal Art for donating a brand-new handmade Soldier who has been unofficially named Tommy 2. With thanks to Trevor Legg from the Sturminster Newton Branch of the Royal British Legion for organising this.

Youth Town Council

In order to increase our engagement with young people in the Town, we have set up a Youth Town Council with the High School. Meetings are held every six weeks, following as closely as possible the format of a Town Council meeting. Open discussion and actionable topics are raised. We hope this will provide an avenue for young people to approach the Town Council

about things that matter to them. We will be in contact with William Barnes and Yewstock School to find ways to engage with their pupils too.

Youth Club

In the last ten days we have been granted planning approval from Dorset Council to temporarily change the use of one of the units at Butts Pond to a Youth Club. We currently are in the process of signing lease papers. The Youth Town Council are helping us to shape the look and set up of the club. The current Youth Club Committee will be organising the running of the club when it is ready. We hope this will be ready for the new school year in September if not before.

Looking Forward….

Neighbourhood Plan Review

We started to review the Neighbourhood Plan last year but with a new Government and various changes being made to the National Planning Policy at both central and local levels we resolved to pause the project until things became clearer. After attending a recent conference with representatives from Dorset Council we now have a better understanding of the changes and plan to restart the review shortly.

The Mill

The Mill is owned by Hinton St Mary Estate and is leased to the Town Council. The Heritage Trust have an arrangement with the Town Council to run the Mill on our behalf. As you may know the Mill is currently closed. This is to check the safety of the structure. We need a specialist structural engineer and a mill right to do the inspection which is taking some time to organise due to the lack of specialists available. Safety will always be our priority, but we are doing everything we can to get the mill back open again as soon as possible. Following the inspection, we will then be looking at a mayor renovation project which will involve looking for grant funding

The Allotments

We are currently looking at entering into a lease agreement with the Sturminster Newton Allotment Association for both the Filbridge Rise and Chinnocks sites. This will enable the Association to run both sites themselves and gives them opportunities to apply for funding to enhance the sites and facilities offered.

Developer Funding

We are working with several community groups who have projects which require capital that could be funded through grants from developers. There are also projects which the Town Council could apply for funds from the same scheme. Look out for a community consultation later in the year.

We are looking forward to commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE-Day on the 8th May this year and have an evening Civic service of celebration at St Mary's Church followed by participation in the national beacon lighting. A traditional style Dance will be held in The Exchange this Saturday the 3rd May.

We will continue to fund the 'What's Happening in Stur' newsletter and thank the Learning Centre and Penny Mountain for their hard work putting this publication together.

Our Council meetings are open to members of the public and anyone in attendance can comment, ask questions or raise concerns that they would like the Council to consider. The next meeting which will be the annual Town Council meeting will be held on Wednesday the 7th May, here in the Council Chamber at 7.15pm.

6. **Open Forum -** the Town Council were asked –

- when will the mural on the wall at Hansons be finished? Cllr Batstone replied - Another artist is being sought to finish this project.
- would it be possible to get a sign erected at the traffic lights at the top of Old Market Hill which would direct traffic to The Exchange. Cllr Batstone replied - It was explained that this would be a considerable cost to the Town Council, but may be reconsidered again at a later date when they could reapply.
- Cllr Batstone - the Friends of Sturminster Newton Library had ended as it had achieved its aim, and the proceeds of their bank account have been given to Dorset Library Service and earmarked for Sturminster Newton library.
- Were there any plans for a new play area near to the development at Elm Close and Stourcastle? The Town Clerk explained that a play area was included on the development.

There being no further comments or questions, the meeting was declared closed at 8.23pm.