



Sturminster Newton Town Council Lost Property Policy

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out how Sturminster Newton Town Council will handle, store and dispose of lost property handed in at, or found on, Council-owned or Council-managed premises.

The aims are to:

- protect the belongings of members of the public,
- provide a clear and consistent process for staff,
- ensure compliance with legal responsibilities, and
- dispose of unclaimed property fairly and lawfully.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all items:

- found by Council staff or contractors on Council land or in Council buildings,
- handed in to Council offices or staff by members of the public, or
- left behind during Council events or activities.

Hazardous, illegal or dangerous items are treated under a separate process (see Section 7).

3. Recording Lost Property

All lost property should be logged in the Lost Property Register, noting:

- item description,
- date and location found,
- name and contact details of finder (if voluntarily provided),
- any identifying information on the item, and
- action taken to trace the owner.

Personal data will be handled in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

4. Items Found on Council Premises

Where an item is found on premises owned or managed by the Council:

4.1 Attempt to identify and notify the owner

Wherever reasonably practicable, the Council will attempt to contact the owner and issue notice requiring collection within one month. The notice will state that if the item is not collected within one month, ownership will pass to the Council.

4.2 If the owner cannot be identified

If, after reasonable steps, the owner cannot be identified, the item will be retained for one month, after which ownership will vest in the Council.

5. Items Handed In That Were Found Elsewhere

When items are handed in that were not found on Council premises:

5.1 Attempt to identify the owner

The Council will attempt to notify the owner and give notice to collect within one month, with a warning that if not collected within six months, ownership will pass to the Council.

5.2 If no owner can be identified

If no owner is identified, the Council will store the item for six months from the date received.

6. Perishable, Unsafe or Unmanageable Items

The Council may dispose of items at any time if they are:

- perishable,
- unsafe to store,
- prohibited,
- not reasonably capable of being stored, or
- costly to retain securely.

Items may be sold, recycled or disposed of. Any proceeds belong to the Council at the point the item would have vested.

7. Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items must not be retained or handled beyond initial safeguarding:

- weapons or items resembling weapons,
- controlled drugs or substances,
- alcohol, vaping devices or tobacco,
- bank cards or financial documents,
- identity documents (passports, driving licences etc.).

Such items must be handled in accordance with police guidance, data protection requirements and relevant legislation.

8. Expenses and Recovery Costs

The Council may charge reasonable costs to the owner for inquiries, storage or administration before releasing an item.

9. Rewards for Finders

Where ownership has vested in the Council, it may, but is not obliged to, transfer the item or its value to the finder as a reward.

10. Disposal of Unclaimed Property

Once ownership vests in the Council, unclaimed property may be:

- recycled,
- donated to charity,
- used by the Council, or
- sold, with proceeds retained by the Council.

Disposal must be authorised by the Town Clerk/RFO or a delegated officer.

11. Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, police or lost property guidance, or operational need.

Approved on: 26 November 25

Review due: November 28