

STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL held on Wednesday 5th March 2025 at 7.15pm in The Council Chamber

Present:

Cllr P Batstone (Chair)
Cllr L Cooper
Cllr N Dobson
Cllr A Donaldson
Cllr C Fraser

Cllr M Jones
Cllr D Mantock
Cllr P Marks
Cllr J Matthews
Cllr J Rose

In Attendance: K Squire (Town Clerk)

Members of the Public: 5

Minute No. Comments

24/25/274 To receive comments and questions from members of the public.

Residents from Penny Street spoke about the worsening issues at the pinch point by the entrance to The Old School House, the inconsiderate parking causes access issues for the emergency services, refuse lorries and farm vehicles.

Dorset Councillor Carole Jones report.

Cllr Jones had sent apologies as the new Town Council meeting day occasionally clashed with another meeting she needed to attend.

She reported to the Clerk prior to the meeting that:

- Proposed overnight parking charges were being reviewed due to opposition, but budgets were tight.
- There would be a temporary patching of Hole House Lane.
- She has been encouraging anyone with objections to the development on the A357 to register to speak at the Northern Area Planning Committee.
- She is involved with a Dorset Council/NHS prevent programme.
- The interim CEO at Dorset Council is Sam Crowe, the recruitment process is underway.
- The Hub is off to a flying start. Cllrs asked that Cllr Jones be sent thanks for implementing such a great facility in the Town.

24/25/275 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Lacey, these were accepted by the members present.

24/25/276 Declarations of interest and written applications for dispensations.

Cllr Cooper declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application P/HOU/2025/00774.

No requests for dispensation were received.

24/25/277 Minutes of the Town Council meeting 5th February 2025.

The minutes of the previous Town Council meeting held on 5th February 2025, having been circulated and publicised prior to the meeting, were taken as read and approved for signature by the Committee Chair as a true and correct record.

24/25/278 **To approve planning applications:**

- P/HOU/2025/00867 Woodlands Farm A357, Fiddleford
No Objection
- P/NOTP/2025/00849 Telephone Kiosk Newton Hill
Objection. There is no mobile signal in the area. This phone is part of the Emergency Network facility for the town.
- P/HOU/2025/00774 10 Selwood Close
No objection
- P/HOU/2025/00511 Silver Birch Farm, 5 Rivers Corner
No information to give in support or objection
- P/FUL/2025/00582 Silver Birch Farm, 5 Rivers Corner
No information to give in support or objection
- P/TRC/2025/01024 Dashwood, Penny Street
No Objection

24/25/279 **To approve reserves to February 2025.**

A report listing the reserves to February 2025 had been previously circulated.

The Council resolved to approve the reserves to February 2025.

24/25/280 **To approve asset register to February 2025.**

The asset register to February 2025 had been previously circulated.

The Council resolved to approve the asset register to February 2025.

24/25/281 **To approve financial risk assessment and internal controls for 2024/2025.**

The financial risk assessment and internal controls for 2024/2025 had been previously circulated. Members agreed to change the risk for loss of key personnel to high until the appointment of the Finance & Admin Office.

Subject to the above change, the Council resolved to approve the financial risk assessment and internal controls for 2024/2025.

24/25/282 **To approve powers for spending for 2025/2025.**

This item was deferred.

24/25/283 **To approve effectiveness of internal audit for 24/25 as required by external auditor.**

The Council reviewed the scope of work agreed with the internal auditor. The chair and vice chair of the Finance & Policy Committee, along with the Clerk, confirmed that the work had been carried out effectively.

The Council resolved to approve that the internal audit for 24/25 had been effective.

24/25/284 **To approve revised terms and conditions of hire of Town Council land.**

The terms and conditions of hire of Town Council land had been previously circulated.

The Council resolved to approve the terms and conditions of hire of Town Council land.

- 24/25/285 **To consider a request from Penny Street residents regarding a traffic regulation order for yellow lines and agree further actions.**
 (This item was considered at the beginning of the meeting.)
 The Grounds Manager produced a report which was considered by members, along with the views of Penny Street residents present.
The Council resolved to agree to the suggestion from Dorset Council to install bollards at the pinch point on Penny Street, displaying no parking signs.
The Council also resolved to begin the process of a Traffic Regulation Order.
- 24/25/286 **To consider an update from the Staffing Sub-Committee.**
 The members considered an update from the staffing sub-committee regarding office staffing.
The Council resolved to approve the following recommendations of the sub-committee:
- **A Finance & Admin Officer post to be advertised as soon as possible.**
 - **A Receptionist post to be created.**
 - **The existing Office Administrator role to be increased to 22 hours per week.**
 - **Temporary cover for reception in the absence of the Office Administrator to be arranged using an agency.**
- 24/25/287 **To approve payments over £2000.**
The Council resolved to approve the following payments:
Morelock Speed Indicator Device £3300 (£2750 net)
Smith of Derby Town Clock Repairs £2060.40 (£1717 net)
Heritage Electrical Market Column Lighting £2827.36 (£2356.13 net)
- 24/25/288 **To receive correspondence.**
 No correspondence had been received.
- 24/25/289 **To receive a report from the Town Clerk.**
 The Town Clerk reported:
- Dorset Council do not respond to individual emergency call outs in icy road conditions, gritting only takes place on approved and ground temperature tested routes. This had been raised following a report to Dorset Council from the Grounds Manager the previous weekend, and subsequent report to Dorset Council from the local Police Officer following a road traffic accident shortly after.
 - The Town Clock had been serviced and the Market Column lighting had been repaired.
 - The additional Speed Indicator Device had been ordered.
 - Following health and safety concerns at the Mill, the Clerk had advised the Heritage Trust that it should remain closed to public and volunteers until an inspection could be done. She had arranged meetings with the Town Council Mill working group, the Dorset Council Museums Co-Ordinator and the Heritage Trust to establish the best way forward.
 - She attended a Future Planning' event with Cllrs Donaldson and Mantock, who would report to the next P&E committee meeting.
 - She had also met with the Dorset Council Highways representative, the Grounds Manager would report on this at the next P&E committee meeting.

- She advised members that the Council office would be closed on Thursdays until the Office Administrator returned to work and asked Cllrs to bear with her until the office team was back up to full strength as she was currently working on nine projects/tasks in addition to her normal work load.

24/25/290 To receive a report from the Town Mayor.

The Clerk reported in the absence of the Town Mayor:

- She had attended a meeting to confirm activities to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE day. These included a traditional 1940's dance in The Exchange on Saturday the 3rd May 25 with prizes for the best period costume. Flag raising at 10am on Thursday the 8th May, a service at St Mary's Church at 8pm on the same day, followed by a beacon lighting at 9.30pm.
- She also reported that she would be attending the first meeting of the Youth Town Council on the 6th March with Cllr Marks and the Grounds Manager.

24/25/291 To receive information from members and proposals for future business.

Members reported:

Cllr Mantock attended neighbourhood plan training and would share a summary at the next P&E committee meeting.

Cllr Donaldson attended the future planning event and would share a summary at the next P&E committee meeting.

Cllr Matthews - asked about the adoption of the highway at Drovers.

Cllr Jones - asked about the poppies by the horse sculpture in the Community Gardens.

Cllr Dobson - advised members of changes to business waste collections as new legislation would soon be implemented.

Cllr Marks - reported attending the Vale Family Hub which was very busy. He updated members that the Community Emergency Response Plan was progressing well. He also said he would be attending the Youth Town Council the next day.

Cllr Fraser – Expressed his concerns about the running of the Mill and questioned the suitability of the current arrangement with the Heritage Trust. He pointed out that if the Council agreed to commit to a longer lease than the current yearly rolling contract, then the succession plan and governance of the Heritage Trust would need to be carefully considered.

Cllr Batstone – advised members that Easter events were being planned to include Easter bonnets and a parade. She also reminded those present of the annual pancake race.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.06pm

Chair's Signature Approved on