

STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL held on Wednesday 4th June 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 D Mantock (Vice Chair)

Cllr P Marks

Cllr J Matthews

Cllr J Rose

In attendance:

K Squire (Town Clerk) J Drew (Office Administrator), Sgt Moore and PC Lewis (Dorset Police).

Members of the Public: 1

Minute No: Comment

25/26/022 To receive comments and questions from members of the public.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

The Mayor invited PC Lewis to update the Council as part of agenda item 25/26/029 which was moved up the agenda.

A written report from Dorset Councillor Carole Jones is attached to these minutes.

25/26/023 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr M Jones and Cllr H Lacey. These apologies were accepted by the members present.

25/26/024 To consider declarations of interest and approve any written applications for dispensations.

No interests were declared or written applications for dispensations received.

25/26/025 To approve the minutes of the Annual Town Council Meeting on 7th May 25.

The minutes of the meeting were taken as read and approved for signature by the Chair as a true and correct record.

25/26/026 To consider and make comment on the following planning applications –

- P/VOC/2025/02372 1 The Gables, Bath Road – no objections.
- P/FUL/2025/00248 Banbury Cross Boarding Kennels and Cattery, Angers Lane – no objections.
- P/FUL/2025/02754 Land at Hole House Lane, Glue Hill – no objection to this Agricultural building.

25/26/027 To consider updates on current Town Council projects.

The Council considered a Projects List that had been previously circulated. Updates on the projects will be given at the next Town Council meeting.

25/26/028 To consider Councillor Skills and Training Needs.

Council discussed basic training needs for members.

The Clerk advised that the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) recommends all Councillors complete:

- New Councillor Training
- Code of Conduct
- Introduction to Planning
- Finance for Councillors

The Council agreed that training on communication would be beneficial and they found group training useful, so the Clerk will look into this.

The clerk stressed that training needed to be budgeted for to avoid overspend so requests and bookings should be made by the office rather than directly.

Training in addition to the above should be specific to projects and identified by the Council or Committee.

25/26/029 To consider the lack of preventative policing in the town.

PC Lewis updated Council on work he had been doing that was not always visible to the public but was still vital.

He stressed the need to report online, many times he becomes aware of incidents but nothing has been reported. Reporting can be used to build a picture and if there's no report then it's hard to justify extra policing time.

He continues to be called to assist other towns.

From September there will be a part-time PCSO based in Sturminster Newton to assist with the workload and visible policing.

Sgt Moore explained that a lot of preventative work involves working with other agencies, so even if there is not a visible Police presence, the work done behind the scenes is still preventing problems arising or escalating.

25/26/030 To consider a request from Cllr M Jones to step down from the Finance & Policy Committee and nominate a member.

Cllr Jones stepped down from the Finance & Policy Committee and the Council resolved that Cllr Cooper replace him.

25/26/031 To approve any payments over £2000.

There were no payments to approve.

25/26/032 To receive correspondence.

None received.

25/26/033 To receive a report from the Town Clerk.

We have received two donations from the Blackmore Vale Masons for the Youth Club. When the Youth Club is open, we will invite them to visit the facility and formally thank them for their generosity.

There will be group training with the Internal Auditor tomorrow at 5pm.

There will be an Extra Ordinary Town Council meeting prior to the Planning & Environment Committee meeting on 18 June 2025, to sign off the accounts for 2024/2025.

The Town Clerk will be away next week.

25/26/034 To receive a report from the Town Mayor.

A written report from the Mayor is attached to these minutes.

25/26/035 To receive information from members and discuss proposals for future business.

Cllr Mantock – will be absent for two weeks from the 9th June 25. She is still concerned about the deteriorating state of Colber Bridge. The Grounds Manager will update on this at the next Amenities Committee meeting.

Cllr Donaldson – Had attended the Northern Planning meeting in The Exchange, where the application for 48 houses off the A357 had been approved.

Cllr Marks – Had recently visited the Family Hub which he found to be a fabulous facility.

Cllr Fraser – Welcomed the new charity shops opening in the town, as this will increase visitors using other shops and cafes.

The Chair closed the Meeting at 8.54pm.

Chair's Signature Approved on

Dorset Councillor Carole Jones Report

Community Transport - trying to open more routes using Dorset Community Transport since Nordcat closed. Their website shows the routes available and 4 new routes coming on line shortly.

Economy - we are trying to drive our administration to note that North Dorset exists and that more needs to happen in our rural area. Their current strategy first 11 pages doesn't mention North Dorset at all but focuses on Weymouth and Portland. I am hoping to push an idea which I have already put forward for consideration of a technical college in North Dorset to help youngsters with manual skills. Not sure how far I will get - but its worth a shot!

Day Opportunities - will continue at Stour Connect and Blandford in all likelihood.

There are some serious safeguarding concerns at Fox Court which I am involved with - probably best not to minute but just to let members know.

I am trying to get funding to provide some better equipment for teens in the hub as we are now seeing quite a stream of them coming in. I am hoping that with funding we will open 2 evenings a week and will collaborate with you so that we open on different evenings offering youngsters somewhere 4 - 5 evenings a week.

The Family Hub is offering a host of groups with so many issues, activities and more. We have wellbeing co-ordinators in 3 days a week, Homestart, Social prescribers, Mind, DorPip, You Trust, SNG, Skills & Learning, Menopause support, breast feeding club - the list goes on. We can provide Citizens Advice appointments weekly and these are open to anyone in need - simply call myself or Kim to make an appointment.

The Hub is super busy all of the time!

We are running Summer Activities again all throughout the Summer Holidays at the William Barnes School.

Town Mayor's Report

I start by thanking you for having the confidence in me to elect me as your mayor for this Civic year. I thank Helen for her work for the town as Mayor for three years, which is a lot of personal time to give up.

When I stood for election over a year ago I said I wanted to see our lovely town continue to thrive and buzz and that remains my desire. I will work to promote our town, supporting its residents especially its young people, and its businesses. It is the economy which matters because on that all else hangs.

My report to you is in two parts – Civic engagements and the economy of Stur..

I begin by reporting on civic activities. I look forward, with your help, to showing our town off to other civic leaders in Dorset on the 6th September, which you have had an invitation to. It is also a way of thanking them for their hospitality to the Stur. Mayor.

I represented you at the opening of the Smiley Myley Dog Luxury Boutique on 17th May and then on the 29th May the official opening of the Dorset Blind Association Charity Shop. It was good to see the Dog Boutique taking over the former Agnes and Vera shop so promptly so that it was not empty for long. It was especially good to see one of the traders from 1855 graduating to their own shop and I wish them every success – the report is that so far it is going very well indeed. The Dorset Blind Association have taken over a shop which has been empty for a while and, being out of the way, was not particularly attractive to potential tenants. However they have brought it back to life. Not only is it an attractive conventional charity shop but it will serve as a local drop to access some services and equipment for those needing the Association's help.

I also had the pleasure of representing the Town in Montebourg to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Twinning, along with Joe the Association's President, Fran and 21 other Association Members organised by our redoubtable Secretary Helen Lamper. My thanks to Helen in particular for organising things so efficiently and to M. Le Maire of Montebourg for his generosity and hospitality. At this point I am going to hand over to Joe to present the various gifts which have been given to Stur by Montebourg, and of course the Boules International Match Trophy which has been won back by Stur. Montebourg had it just long enough to clean it.

If I could resume the second part of my report – the economy of Stur.....

Although I was a founder Member of SturAction I have stood down from the Board and my only formal link currently is as Minutes Secretary - that is something I will be giving up shortly, if Nick will allow me. I will continue to work closely with Jacqui Wragg as Events Coordinator and SturBiz Coordinator because over the years I have had considerable practical experience and training in the type of community work we require Jacqui to do.

Two other shops have also been reoccupied during the past few weeks – Jane's vintage ladies clothes shop on the corner of Station Road, and now new occupants in the former estate agents and then grocers shop on the corner of Church St./Bridge St. I understand that a further local charity may be moving into the former Brainwave shop at the bottom of Station Road. It is good that all those shops have been occupied by local Dorset businesses. That leaves us three long empty shops which so far seem to be unwanted but who knows.

I have heard comments in the town that we have too many charity shops. My own view is that I would rather have a charity shop than a long term empty shop, and all our charity shops are attractive inviting premises. Our experience through SturAction is that people come to Stur from other parts of Dorset to browse and enjoy shopping for good quality, low cost items, whilst they also spend their money in our cafes and other shops. We can either bemoan having charity shops or we can celebrate recycling. I

am working closely with Jacqui Wragg and Kate from Newstone House and others, on a project which we are calling “Sustainable Stur”, initially through a fashion and clothes recycling event we are calling “Strut, Swap, Style” and also by the generation who were used to “make do and mend” inviting the younger generation to come down to Newstone House to learn how to mend, restyle or repurpose garments. In the longer term I can envisage a partnership of SturAction, Newstone, the Pantry and Men in sheds working together to have a repair shop or café.

I continue to work with Jacqui to try to resuscitate the Chamber of Commerce for Stur. We are planning to run a joint networking event at The Hinton Workspace between all the North Dorset Market Town Chambers which may also serve as an opportunity to relaunch the Stur. Chamber “SturBiz”. Dorset Council are looking for partners to run a North Dorset Business Day as North Dorset District Council used to do, perhaps later in the year.

Everything which goes on in this town outside of paid employment depends on volunteers and this week is National Volunteers Week. I thank all those who work so devotedly to our local charities and public bodies and that includes yourselves as Councillors. We need more volunteers, and the Town Clerk and I have been discussing how we can build on the legacy of previous Mayors, the two Helens, to support our charities and help them to recruit – perhaps by a networking event later in the year.