

STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

held on Wednesday 13th August 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 H Lacey

Cllr D Mantock (Vice Chair)

Cllr P Marks

Cllr J Matthews

Cllr J Rose

In Attendance: K Squire (Town Clerk), J Drew (Office Administrator).

Members of the Public: 1

Minute No.

24/25/096

Comments

To receive comments and questions from members of the public.

No comments or questions were received from members of the public.

Report from Dorset Councillor Carole Jones.

Cllr Jones had sent apologies and her report is attached to these minutes.

The Council commented that a splashpool was not something they would consider pursuing at this time.

24/25/097

Apologies for Absence.

All members were present.

24/25/098

To consider declarations of interest and approve any written applications for dispensations.

Cllr Fraser wished to declare an interest in Planning Application P/LBC/2025/02015 The Old Mill House as a neighbour.

24/25/099

To approve the Minutes from the previous Town Council meeting.

The minutes of the 2nd July 25 Full Council meeting, having been previously circulated and published were taken as read and approved for signature by the Chair as a true and correct record.

24/25/100

To approve recommendations from the following committee meetings

- **Planning & Environment Committee 16th July 2025 and 23rd July 2025**

There were no recommendations.

- **Finance & Policy Committee 23rd July 2025**

The Chair of Finance & Policy Committee reported that a decision had been made to earmark £2000 each year towards ongoing costs of reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council resolved to approve the recommendations of the Finance & Policy Committee.

24/25/101

To consider parking issues at Friars Moor and Penny Street.

Friars Moor - Members discussed the legalities of the situation and what action could be taken by the Council. They did not agree that writing to residents of Friars Moor would be effective as the Council have no enforcement powers.

The Council resolved to write to Dorset Highways to highlight the problem and ask that they consider implementing a solution.

Penny Street - Cllr Batstone met with residents and Roland Skeats (Dorset Council Highways). The road is due for resurfacing. The existing road markings would be renewed at this time. It was agreed that new white lines would be marked at the pinch point to deter parking there, the bollards previously by Dorset Council Highways were now deemed not suitable. **The Council instructed the Clerk to write to Dorset Council Highways and enquire if these works could be brought forward to ease the current situation.**

24/25/102

To consider drug issue in Town and agree further actions.

There is a growing issue in the town with drug use. The Trailway appears to be being used as a route into Sturminster Newton for drug distribution. The Riverside Meadows car park is another location.

The Council resolved to ask the Clerk to write regarding the ongoing issues to -

- **Police & Crime Commissioner – David Sidwick**
- **Chief Constable Amanda Pearson**
- **Sgt Jane Moore – Blandford Police Station**

24/25/103

To consider timetable for Co-Option of a new Town Councillor.

The Council agreed to Co-opt a new Town Councillor with applications to be submitted by the end of September and decision at 1st October 2025 Town Council meeting.

24/25/104

To approve signing of lease for Unit 2 Richmar Trading Estate.

The Council resolved to allow the Clerk to sign the 5-year lease for Unit 2 Richmar Trading Estate within her delegation to avoid further delays. The Council would prefer an inside only repairing lease but if the landlord was not agreeable to this, the Council resolved to approve signing of the lease as per the draft previously circulated.

25/26/105

To consider upgrade of Microsoft 365 to enhance security.

The Council resolved to approve the quotation of £1200 for the upgrade of the Town Council's system as per the quote previously circulated.

25/26/106

To consider planning applications.

- **P/FUL/2025/03574 Land North of Castle Avenue, Okeford Fitzpaine.**
Comment - The Council are concerned about the impact on the infrastructure of this development, and on the health & education provision of the local area.
They are supportive of Okeford Fitzpaine's Parish Council comments on this application.
- **P/LBC/2025/02015 The Old Mill House, DT10 2DQ**
No Objection.

24/25/107

To consider Health & Safety policy and receive an update on actions following audit.

The Council resolved to adopt the health & safety policy previously circulated subject to clarification on reference to 'the board'.

The clerk reported on outcomes of the recent health & safety audit, these would be actioned by the health & safety officer.

The Council resolved to action the recommendations of the health & safety auditor regarding the Scout Hut as soon as possible and make contact with the Scout Group, County Commissioner to invite a conversation regarding a long term solution.

- 25/26/108 **To approve any payments of over £2000.**
There were no payments of over £2000.
- 25/26/109 **To receive correspondence.**
No correspondence had been received.
- 25/26/110 **To receive a report from the Town Clerk.**
The Clerks report is attached to these minutes.
- 25/26/111 **To receive a report from the Town Mayor.**
The Mayors report is attached to these minutes
- 25/26/112 **To receive information from members and proposals for future business.**
Cllr Mantock – had attended the Young Carers session at the Hub. There are 80+ young carers in Sturminster Newton at present.
Cllr Rose – informed the Council that he had received the June statistics from the Speedwatch group and that he would distribute for Councillors to see.
Cllr Cooper – has been speaking to a local resident regarding the footpath across the Market Fields site to the Fire Station.
Cllr Donaldson – Reported on various planning matters for information. With the recent closure of the Rutters Solicitors office, there is no longer a Solicitor in Sturminster Newton. Hall & Woodhouse are rumoured to be trying to sell The Swan public house.
Cllr Matthews – there are problems with the street lighting in The Gavel. The Clerk suggested Cllr Matthews to check with Dorset Cllr Carole Jones if this development has been adopted.
Cllr Lacey – reported that the sign at Ingrams has now been ordered. There is a Dorset Council online Parking Survey which anyone can complete. She attended Debbie Hurst's memorial with staff members to pay respects.
- The Council resolved to suspend Standing Order 3x to allow the meeting to continue beyond two hours. Standing Orders were reinstated at the conclusion of the meeting.
- Cllr Dobson* – reported that some young children had stolen items from 1855. This has been reported to William Barnes Primary School who will assist in addressing the incident.
Cllr Batstone – informed that there will be a Fashion Show with all the towns charity shops contributing. It is hoped to bring the Chamber of Commerce back.
- Cllr Fraser left the meeting at 9.02pm.
- 25/26/113 **Confidential Item – Staffing Matters.**
The Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee gave a verbal report to the Council, and this was noted by members.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.20 pm

Approved on Chairman's Signature

25/26/096 Dorset Councillor Carole Jones Report

In terms of a report, - I am sure everyone will have seen the issues regarding financial conduct and the lack of oversight which allowed costs to go from 4M approved to 13 million - not approved and get away with it. This is under a police investigation and there is nothing further I can add at this time other than to say that no elected member had any ideas this was going on - it was clever and duplicitous, I think it left a great number of the SLT embarrassed and shocked.

Plans are underway for a 56 bed reablement centre in Bridport which looks amazing but wont be open until Summer 2028. DC has a 80M budget for reablement centres - over the longer term it is expected that there will be savings. Discussions are taking place with the NHS with regards to on going revenue costs.

I am concerned about the number of NEET's in North Dorset which account for just over 4% of our teenage population. I am keen to try and challenge DC to put more resources into North Dorset with a technical college of some sort. Transport costs are prohibitive for a number of families whose youngsters wish to attend Yeovil or Weymouth.

I would like to introduce an idea to the TC to work towards a splash park area for small children. The perfect example of this has been installed in Warminster. It is really well used and encourages children to play together, parented to meet up and it's just a wonderful amenity, and rather immediately dismiss it out of hand - could there please be a discussion as to how it might be possible to make this happen? Without a real understanding of costs we cant really work through possibilities.

The Family Hub is absolutely thriving, it is incredibly busy with a number of fantastic outcomes being made possible. The greatest challenge remains around finances and space - we could do with a lot more of both!

Coming up will be a very contentious area of planning around the Broad Oak area, - we need to really get a good understanding around this proposal as it is unlike anything we have dealt with before.

25/26/110 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Mill

I finally received a quote from the Millwright this afternoon. The cost will be £8144. Structural works are paused due to a bumblebee nest; the North Dorset Beekeepers advise these are likely to move on soon the cost for this is £285. Philip Hughes has also sent in a quote (part estimated) for the condition survey, this is essential for the Lottery grant application, the lease, and the Expression of Interest the cost for this is approx.. £9134. The total is £17,563. We have just over £12k in EMR so would need to find £5494. I will put this on the next TC agenda and look at the finances and options. Cllr. Mantock and Jas are helping to move this forward and it would be great to get the mill running again, even if the survey is delayed until the new financial year.

Youth Club

Following Council's direction, I contacted Mike Bennett of Dorset Youth Association for a quotation to run the Youth Club. His offer was less competitive than Youth Connect South West's (YCSW) proposal, which he fully supports. I met with Jayne and Rob from YCSW at the site; they are enthusiastic, have a lead youth worker in mind, and will provide a draft contract. The unit will need a deep clean, repainting, and some internal carpentry before opening.

Youth Club Funding

Jasmine has secured £1,000 from One Stop in her first bid and continues to apply for further funding.

External Audit

Two queries from the External Auditor have been answered. No further response received.

Staff Handbook

Work is ongoing with WorkNest to update the Staff Handbook in line with current legislation. This includes new requirements for employers to prevent workplace sexual harassment, involving a risk assessment and action plan. Advice is being taken to ensure full compliance, with a view to presenting the updated handbook to the next Finance & Policy Committee.

Staffing Update

The Council will be interviewing for a Receptionist and a Grounds Operative in the next couple of weeks. The Staffing Committee will report to the Finance & Policy Committee at its next meeting.

Highways & Parking

On 25th July, the Grounds Manager met Patrick Carpenter from Dorset Highways regarding line marking in the town centre and recreation car park, and issues in Penny Street. Town centre markings do not meet the 75% deterioration threshold for free replacement, so full costs would apply; as a guide, repainting bays and hatchings in the rec car park alone would exceed £1,000. Penny Street discussions were later superseded by Cllr. Batstone's meeting with Roland Skeates.

Colber Bridge

The willows obstructing the river have been reported to Hinton Estate, who will arrange removal. Adam has met with the Rangers; a new gate is being made to match the original. The repainting

quote for the bridge is over £100,000, largely due to environmental restrictions preventing paint and rust from entering the river. Removing the structure for off-site work would also be costly. Dorset Council will not fund either option; the structure is expected to remain sound for about 20 years. Funding sources will be explored.

VJ Day – Friday 15th August

Due to the very dry weather, the Grounds Manager and I have decided not to light the beacon, as it is unsafe. The fire brigade has confirmed they would not recommend lighting it. The beacon will still be displayed, using orange fairy lights to simulate the flame. Anyone attending the Church Service who has not informed Jasmine should do so. Don't forget the flag-raising at 10:00 am in the Railway Gardens.

25/26/111 Sturminster Newton Town Mayor's Report to Council 13.8.2025

Since my last report to the July Town Council I have been privileged to represent the Council at the following events:

On the 5th July I was invited to open the Forgotten Frowns Beauty Salon (corner of Bridge St. and Market Cross). I wish Cassie (Feist) and her colleagues every success – they bring a range of beauty and therapeutic treatments to that part of Stur. We are fortunate to have such a choice of hairdressers and beauticians in town.

On the evening of the 11th July I enjoyed the cool calm of Milton Abbey at the 65th Anniversary Celebration of the Dorset Historic Churches Trust, learning more about the history of the Trust and how it supports our ancient churches.

The following morning I opened the Green Lake Studio in Station Road where Irina will not only sell crafting materials, particularly those for crochet, but also run classes in crochet. It is good to see that little shop open again and Irina has arranged her stock in such a way that there appears to be twice as much room as before, plus the classroom upstairs. Good luck her, and she is the second of the traders from 1855 to progress to her own shop. On my way from there I popped into The Exchange to catch the last part of the Sturminster Newton Community Orchestra's Summer Concert. I do think they are a very undervalued asset to the town and deserve all the support we can give them. There was more music on Thursday 17th July in the afternoon at Newstone House when residents and guests enjoyed music from the 60s through to the 80s – it is really hard to keep up with the social activities of the residents down there.

On the very hot afternoon of the 18th July I attended Yewstock School Summer Fayre which was well attended by parents, carers and friends but also by outside stall holders, supplementing the stalls being run by the pupils. The opportunity to throw wet sponges at the staff, in particular the head, was very popular with the pupils. At the invitation of Fiona Locke, Head of William Barnes School, I attended the Leavers Assembly on the afternoon of Monday 21st July. Those whose final day at the school it was recounted their best memories of their time at William Barnes. They also received the gift of a personalised "hoodie" from the parents association which they put on with pride.

I spent a very relaxing evening of the 24th July watching the Stour roll by in the company of the Heritage Trustees down at the Mill who had invited all Councillors to come and have a look round. The machinery is now able to run, but not at the moment to mill flour. Hopefully that will soon be possible again once the cogs have been replaced. We are so fortunate to have such a valuable asset for the town. What was worrying though was that for all those two hours there was no sign of any wildlife on the surface of the river.

The following week it was back to more festivities at Newstone House when Giles and Annie Henshel shared their story of how they have come to set up their nationally known business of Olives et Al and shared a taste of their olives and other goodies with the residents and guests. Just in case those did not fill people up enough the Newstone chef and his team also provided some Mediterranean items to go in the remaining gaps. Well done to the Newstone team for all they do to keep their residents active and involved with the community outside of the house. Thank you also to Giles and Annie for a very entertaining evening, it is a fascinating story. The Deputy Mayor Debbie and her Escort Ken also came in support, even if Debbie had to confess to Giles she cannot bear the taste of olives.

On Thursday 31st July, although I no longer have any formal role with SturAction, I was pleased as Mayor to attend the North Dorset Business Awards Winners event to support the SturAction Team and the three other Stur. award winning businesses, plus two from Hinton (Daisy Delbridge, Hello Gorgeous, The Strange Apothecary, Hinton Workspace, Bartletts Contractors). Overall the Stur plus Hinton businesses received ten awards.

On Saturday 2nd August I was delighted to accept the invitation to start the Summer Charity Run, held after the Car and Bike Enthusiasts meeting (320 vehicles). I understand that 80 vehicles participated in the Run, raising over £850 for the Air Ambulance – congratulations to Clive Dodson and his team for organising that.

Later that afternoon the Deputy Mayor Cllr Mantock and her husband and I attended a much more sombre affair in Wimborne Minster as the 2nd August is Roma Holocaust Day commemorating the between 500,00 and 1,500,000 Gypsies killed as part of “the final solution” by the Nazis. On the night of the 2nd August alone, remembered as “the Night of the Gypsies” 2,897 died. All those remaining in the so called Family Camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the old, sick, mothers with children, were gassed in one night. The service of remembrance was attended by the Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, Chairman of Dorset Council, Chairman of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Mayors and Chairmen from Parishes and Towns across Dorset, plus members of the Gypsy and other communities. The Gypsy and Traveller community are the largest ethnic grouping in Dorset, Gypsies being originally driven out of North India by persecution and here for six hundred or so years, quietly getting on with their lives.

On Wednesday 6th August Cllr Donaldson was planning to step into the breach and declare open the revamped “Twice as Nice” charity shop up at Stour Connect which aims to raise funds for the Community Connections charity. I had a lunch commitment in Brockenhurst and unlikely to be back in time. Unfortunately I was sitting in my car with a puncture in the middle of the New Forest waiting to be rescued by the AA. Thank you Andrew. Community Connections supports the work going on at Stour Connect for adults with a range of needs arising from disabilities, age or isolation. It also runs the café there which is a good place to pop in for a coffee, breakfast, lunch or snack

anytime up till 1.00 p.m. Community Connections are planning a Tea Party on the afternoon of VJ Day (15th August, 2.30 pm.). This is to bring anyone who wishes to commemorate those who suffered during the war, and to celebrate the end of WWII – free and open to all.

On the evening of the 9th August, I have been invited as Mayor to attend an event at SturFit to learn more about what they have to offer and help them to raise funds for their community charity.

I am currently working with the Town Council Team on the VJ Day Commemoration to be held on 15th August and the Sturminster Newton Town Council Civic Day on the 7th September which is an opportunity to show representatives of other parishes and towns what a great place Stur is. I hope fellow councillors will support me with both of those events.

Councillor Pauline Batstone.