

STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE
Held on Wednesday 25th June 2025 at 7.15pm in the Council
Chamber

In attendance:

Cllr P Batstone	Cllr P Marks (Chair)
Cllr L Cooper (Vice Chair)	Cllr A Donaldson
Cllr C Fraser	Cllr M Jones
Cllr H Lacey	Cllr J Rose

Also in attendance: K Squire (Clerk) A Dodson (Grounds Manager) N Curtis (Assistant Grounds Manager) R Revell (Admin & Finance Officer)

Members of the public: 4

Minute No	Comment
25/26/044	To receive comments and questions from members of the public. Members of the public are invited to raise any matter and speak for up to three minutes. • The Chair of the Sturminster Newton Allotments Association (SNAA) updated gave an update. • A member of the public spoke regarding problems parking two large vans overnight. This will be considered at the next Full Council meeting. • A member of the public spoke regarding dogs on leads signs on the trailway. The Grounds Manager will make enquiries with the Dorset Council Rangers.
25/26/045	Apologies for Absence. Apologies were received from Cllr D Mantock. These apologies were accepted by members present.
25/26/046	To receive declarations of interests and approve any written applications for dispensations. No declarations of interest were made or written applications for dispensation received
25/26/047	To approve the minutes of the previous Amenities Committee meeting, held on the 26.09.24 The minutes of the previous Amenities Committee that were held on the 26th of September 2024 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. <u>Matters Arising</u> The Clerk updated members that: • Noticeboards for display of cemetery regulations were being ordered. • She was waiting for a response from Grassby's Funeral Directors regarding the lease and would then provide a full update.

- 25/26/048 To receive an update on the Youth Club and agree further actions.**
Cllr Lacey updated members on progress with the project.
The lease is with the solicitors and a meeting had taken place with South West Youth Connect to run the club. Consideration needed to be given to short and long term funding. This would be discussed at next weeks Full Council meeting.
- 25/26/049 To consider releasing a statement to counter misinformation circulating regarding the Scout Hut.**
A draft statement had been previously circulated and is attached to these minutes.
The Committee resolved to recommend the statement be printed in the next issue of What's Happening in Stur and posted on the website and Facebook page
- 25/26/050 To receive an update on Mill maintenance.**
The Clerk provided an update to the Committee following recent works to the Mill wheel. Written confirmation that Milling can re-commence had been received from the Millwright. Quotes for further works are due before more progress can be made on the refurbishment project.
- 25/26/051 To consider a quote for repairs to the surfacing at Ricketts Lane play area. ***
The Grounds Manager provided an update to the Committee regarding the play area surface.
The Committee resolved to recommend that the quote be accepted and repairs made.
- 25/26/052 To consider emergency works to trees at Riverside Meadows, Butts Pond Nature Reserve and the Jubilee Footpath.***
The Grounds Manager reported to the Committee on tree works needed. Quotes had been received.
The Committee resolved to recommend that the Grounds Manager go ahead with the quote he felt was best.
- 25/26/053 To consider installation of Bike Racks at Station Road.**
A request for Sheffield style bike racks to be installed within the town had been received. Locations in Station Road and Market Cross were suggested. The Committee asked the Clerk to look into costs and report back at the next meeting.
- 25/26/054 To receive a report from the Footpaths Officer.**
Cllr Cooper reported that the stile and bridge repairs in the Broad Oak area have been completed. Further works are planned in the Rolls Mills area, where hedge cutting will take place.
The Rangers are aware of instances where local farmers have obstructed footpaths with hedges and crops, and this matter will be addressed. Additional works with the Rangers are planned, and processes will be developed to improve communication regarding future footpath works.
It was noted that footpath volunteers will assist with hedge and tree cutting, and dates for this work will be scheduled.
Work on the walkabout leaflets remains ongoing, with a meeting to be arranged to progress this project further.

- 25/26/055 To receive a report from the Grounds Manager.**
The Grounds Managers report is attached to these minutes.
- 25/26/056 To receive information from members and proposals for future business.**
- Cllr Batstone- reported complaints received regarding the lack of toilet facilities at the Recreation Ground. The Grounds Manager reported that repairs had been done but opening hours were restricted due to vandalism in the evenings. She had attended a fundraising evening at St Mary's Church to raise money for restoration of the stained glass window.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.22pm

Approved on Signed

Agenda Item 25/26/049

Sturminster Newton Youth Hub Project – Public Statement

There's been some confusion recently about the Town Council's plans for youth facilities, particularly around the Scout Hut. To be clear: we are not trying to shut down the Scouts to take their building. We value the Scouts and want to see them thrive.

How it started

In 2019, the Charity of William Williams expressed concerns regarding the lack of youth provision in Sturminster Newton and offered to fund a Youth Hub in town. A suitable venue couldn't be found, so the Scout Hut was considered. It was underused and hadn't had much maintenance over the years.

The Scout leaders agreed to give up their lease, provided they could still use the building at set times. This was necessary for the criteria of the funding, as the building needed to be managed by a new organisation open to all youth groups.

The Town Council funded professional advice, planning, and legal work to move things forward—always with the Scouts' use guaranteed. But when costs for refurbishment came in at around £450,000, it was clear a large loan would be needed, which wasn't sustainable.

A new idea

At the same time, the Council had already been planning to upgrade its Grounds team facilities, with a separate project costing around £350,000—also needing a public loan. Combined, the two projects would have meant borrowing around £550,000, which would have put a serious burden on local taxpayers.

So we came up with a new proposal: swap the use of the two buildings. The existing Scout Hut could become the Grounds Workshop (a low-cost conversion mostly covered by existing reserves), and we could build a brand-new, single-storey Youth Hub directly on the recreation ground where the current grounds buildings are currently located.

The new building would be easier to access, purpose-built for youth use, and mostly funded through grants. The Scouts would still get the same agreed access—without the responsibility of running or maintaining the building. That would fall to the new Youth Hub organisation, leaving the Scouts free to focus on running activities and growing their group. However, after considering the proposal, the Scout leaders chose to withdraw from the project and said they would continue independently.

Moving forward

The decision was a huge disappointment, especially due to the amount of time and funds spent and the Youth Hub plans stalled. We also had to arrange for the Scout Hut to be inspected and requested a maintenance plan, as the building's condition had become a concern.

We're now working on a smaller Youth Hub near the changing rooms, independent of the Scouts. We are aware this may create competition for room bookings with the Scout Hut, and have reached out again to the Scout leaders to ask them to reconsider their position. We remain concerned about the long-term financial sustainability of the Scout group and the possibility that the building may eventually be handed back to the Council—leaving two buildings with only one in active use.

Temporary solution

In the meantime, we're setting up a temporary Youth Club at the Richmar Trading Estate (opposite the Boxing Club), aiming to open by September. It's being developed with the High School Council, South West Youth Connect, and other local partners.

We thank the Charity of William Williams for their continued support.

To be clear:

- We are **not** trying to stop Scouting in the town.
- We are committed to delivering youth facilities that benefit everyone.
- Our door remains open for the Scouts to rejoin the conversation.

For any questions, contact admin@sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk or visit

www.sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk for Council meeting dates.

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Grounds Report Amenities Meeting Wednesday 25th June 2025

Cemetery – The grounds staff carried out the planned planting of the wildflower meadow. It has been a great success. We will be increasing the area for next year.

Community Garden – Unfortunately, there were a few negative comments regarding the community garden on Facebook. Mainly the assumption that it's just dead grass and looks horrible. We will be planting more wildflower seed ready for next year, but once the flowers have finished, it will look the same as it does now. The wildlife and birds living/ feeding in the community garden grows every year and certainly is more important than some of the narrow-minded views expressed on social media.

We have had some nice comments from people that walk through and appreciate the garden for what it is.

The Town Council does not own the site, so cannot plant trees or spend large amounts of money on something that will be built on eventually.

Police/ CCTV – The CCTV system proved its worth over the last few months. Images and footage were found for several Policing matters. This included a stolen Ebike, assaults in Railway Gardens, a car crashing into a bollard and extensive work on the missing person. It has been a good exercise to understand where the cameras should be facing and also what other locations would benefit from additional cameras.

Recreation Ground Ricketts Lane – The Public toilet has been repaired. We have removed the old wash station and had the electrics isolated. The broken pipework replaced and a cold water sink installed. These toilets will be open during Grounds staff working hours 7am-3.30pm and/ or for events.

Colber Bridge – The Countryside Rangers obtained a price for a new gates to be made for the bridge. £1000 +VAT

Tree Inspections – We are currently obtaining quotations along with the Countryside Rangers for tree works at Butts Pond Nature reserve and Riverside meadows. Works required are attached with the quotations.

Jubilee Footpath Silver birch trees, quotations have been received for 3 options.

- 1) Light trim of branches to keep away from buildings. 2-3m gap
- 2) Remove larger limbs growing towards houses, leaving higher growth.
- 3) Fell all 6 Silver birches.

I had spoken to a resident who was concerned about losing the trees completely, as it hides the industrial building and reduces noise. We could remove 2 trees and trim the rest.

SID – The new SID has been installed outside the cemetery and is working well.

Play Facilities – Ricketts Lane junior area requires Wet pour safety surface repairs due to shrinkage. We had been monitoring this and hoped it would last another year or two, but sadly it has become worse in this hot weather and now is a trip hazard.

A quote has been obtained from Redlynch Leisure who installed the new equipment.