STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1st APRIL 2026 AT 7.15 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

PRESENT:
Cllr P Batstone
Cllr L Cooper
Cllr A Donaldson
Cllr C Fraser
Cllr J Rose

IN ATTENDANCE:
K Squire (Town Clerk) J Drew (Office Administrator) Adam Dodson (Grounds Manager)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 6

MINUTE NO	COMMENTS
	Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor Cllr Rose reported: This evening we remember Pam Naylor who sadly passed away on 11th March. Although newer members will not have known her, Pam was our Finance Officer for many years and was a hard-working, loyal member of the team and always carried out her tasks with great care and diligence. She was greatly appreciated, and will be sadly missed, by all who knew her. Our thoughts and good wishes go out to her husband Malcolm and all her family. The Funeral Service will be at Yeovil Crematorium on 10th April at 1:20pm – donations to Weldmar Hospice are requested in lieu of flowers.
25/26/302	**To receive comments and questions from members of the public** A member of the public spoke regarding the governance review currently in progress and enquired regarding the previous youth club accounts, the Town Council was not in a position to comment as this youth club was not run by the Town Council nor were any of it's committee members representing the Town Council.
25/26/303	**Report from Dorset Councillor Carole Jones** Attached to these minutes.
25/26/304	**Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Cllrs Dobson, Jackson, Lacey, Mantock and Trim. These apologies were accepted by members.
25/26/305	**To approve declarations of interest and written applications for dispensation** No interests were declared and no written requests for dispensation received.

Chairs Initials .....

25/26/306 **To approve the minutes of the previous Town Council meeting held on 4th March 2026.**

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th March 2026, having been circulated and published prior to the meeting, were taken as a true and correct record and duly signed by the Chair.

25/26/307 **To consider planning applications:**

P/VOC/2026/01603 North Dorset Business Park, Rolls Mill Way – erection of 2 units for office/industrial use – variation of condition
No objection.

P/FUL/2024/04736 Previously R B Snook Building Ltd – demolish existing buildings and erect 28 dwellings
Objection -non compliance with Policy 22 of the Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan.

P/HOU/2026/00780 2 Stour Mews, Goughs Close – erect timber single storey shed
No objection.

P/LBC/2026/01237 Old Orchard, Orchard Close – LBC retain erection of conservatory (demolish existing)
No objection.

P/CLE/2026/01602 Gasons, Stalbridge Lane – Certificate of Lawfulness
No objection.

25/26/308 **To consider entering into a lease agreement with the Sturminster Newton Allotment Association and agree further actions.**

The Council considered a template lease agreement provided by the National Allotment Society. The Clerk advised that she was waiting for confirmation of responsibility for training and if it would be legally robust for the Sturminster Newton Allotment Association to apply for independent grants.
Subject to confirmation of these points, the Council resolved to enter into a lease agreement with the Sturminster Newton Allotment Association for both the Filbridge Rise and Chinnocks sites.

Chairs Initials .....

25/26/309 To receive an update from the Grounds Manager regarding the Youth Facility project.

The Grounds Manager updated the Council on the Youth Facility project phase 2 in the Recreation Ground.

A meeting had been held with interested parties – The Scouts, Boxing Club, Guides & Brownies and Youth Connect South West, who were all keen to proceed providing suitable space and facilities for each organisation will be incorporated into the plan.

A pre-application has been submitted to Dorset Council Planning Department for a large two storey building to see what space is available before the organisations consider options and plans.

The Town Council working group will meet when the response from Dorset Council has been received and will report back to Town Council on progress in due course.

25/26/310 To elect a chair for the Finance & Policy Committee to the end of the Civic Year.

The Council resolved to defer this item to the Annual Town Council meeting.

25/26/311 To consider having a stand for community engagement at the Big Lunch on Saturday 6 June 2026.

The Council resolved to have a stand for community engagement at the Big Lunch on the 6 June 2026.

Cllrs Cooper and Jackson will lead on the project and other members agreed to attend on the day.

25/26/312 To approve payments over £2000.

There were no payments over £2000 to approve.

25/26/313 To receive correspondence.

No correspondence had been received.

25/26/314 To receive a report from the Town Clerk.

- The Clerk apologised that she had omitted to include recommendations from Committees on the agenda. Recommendation from the Planning & Environment and Amenities committees will be included on the next agenda.
- She advised the access issues on the pavement at the bridge had been reported to Dorset Council. She suggested that in situations where emails are sent to all Councillors and Reception the Council may wish to decide on a unified response to save time and doubling up on work.
- Finally, she reported the need to make some changes to meeting dates in April.
    - Finance & Policy will be on Wednesday 15 April 2026
    - Planning & Environment will be on Wednesday 22 April 2026
    - Annual Town Public meeting will be on Thursday 23 April 2026

Chairs Initials .....

25/26/315 To receive a report from the Town Mayor.

The Mayor reported:

- 10th March I attended Twinning Association AGM
- 18th Meeting of the Thriving Communities Group, aiming to encourage and enable community groups to network and exchange information, and to be aware of opportunities to help each other.
- 21st With many others, I had the pleasure of listening to Sturminster Orchestra at their concert in the Exchange. An excellent performance of a wide variety of musical styles

25/26/316 To receive information from members and proposals for future business.

Cllr Fraser – informed members that The Exchange will shortly be able to show plays, ballets and operas from the National Theatre.

Cllr Cooper – is still trying to sort out the tree at Colber Bridge with Hinton St Mary estates. He is also meeting with the Graham Stanley from the Dorset Council Rangers next week.

Cllr Batstone – spoke about North Dorset Tourism Group and the focus on the 100th anniversary of the death of Thomas Hardy. She also enquired about the Town Council communications strategy and getting external assistance with this.

Cllr Donaldson – had finally received a number of emails from Dorset Council in response to the pot holes he had reported. He also noted the damage to the Town Bridge at the weekend.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.10pm

Chairs Signature…… Date Approved …….

Chairs Initials ……

Agenda Item 25/26/303 - Report from Dorset Councillor Carole Jones

The accumulative deficit on the Higher Needs Block remains a concern. The Government has said they are looking to write off 90% but have not said what would happen going forwards, this is a serious concern that affects all councils across the country.

I have been chasing engineering solutions on both Rivers Corner and Chapel Road – both have been promised to ease future issues with flooding.

The new Chief Executive at Dorset Council is leading 'Transformation', my group's worry is that this is happening with little member involvement. There is currently consultation looking at whether scrutiny and overview should be one or two committees. We will be fighting hard to keep scrutiny separate. Currently Overview is chaired by the administration and Scrutiny is chaired by us in opposition – and our chairs are very robust and we feel very firmly that this should be a separate committee and we plan on doing everything possible to ensure we keep and manage scrutiny, it's important to ensure that policies made work, and work well for our residents.

The consultation on the change on the A357 to a 30mph stretch has finished. There are a number of residents who would like to extend this, but as the developer is paying for this – a future extension would need to perhaps be covered by Aldi.

Aldi has put in their planning application, but it has yet to be validated. I have asked whether the delay in their process will affect the store opening and am waiting to hear back.

I had a meeting with DAPTC last week which I believe will feed into the report to the TC.

I would welcome a meeting between myself and all town councillors in order to look at how we can best work together going forwards.

Chairs Initials .....