

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, 9TH JUNE 2025 AT 8PM
TOWCESTER TOWN HALL

Present: Cllr R. Dando L'Olive (Chair), Cllr P. Allen, Cllr C. Askew, Cllr D. Carmichael, Cllr M. Clubley, Cllr J. Godwin, Cllr M. Johns, Cllr J. Lynch, Cllr I. Macaulay, Cllr D. Reed, Cllr D. Reynolds, Cllr D. Tarbun, Cllr M. Wixon

Also present: Miss E. Cox (Town Clerk), Mrs E. Bucklow-Holt (Assistant to the Town Clerk), Cllr A. Little (WNC), Cllr S. Tolley (WNC), Jack (Towcester Youth Council)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr L. Samiotis.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Open to the Public (maximum 15-minute session)

Nine representatives of Towcester Town Junior Football Club (TTJFC) were present. Mr Paul Bayliss, a TTJFC Committee member, addressed the TC regarding Agenda Item 11: Towcester SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches.

Mr Bayliss presented a brief history of the football club, its role within the community and its challenges in finding suitable spaces for its growing number of teams to play. Having submitted two proposals to the Town Council, he expressed the strong desire of TTJFC to take a lead role in managing the new community facility.

WNC Cllr Little conveyed his support for the Football Club's proposals.

PROPOSAL

Cllr Wixon proposed that Agenda Item 11. be brought forward for discussion; seconded by Cllr Reynolds; all in favour.

11. Towcester SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches

To consider the recommendation/s from the Town Council's Sub-committee for the SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches, having given due consideration to the responses submitted to the formerly agreed consultation survey on future use of the facility and the proposal put forward by Towcester Town Football Club

Cllr Reynolds gave a statement on behalf of the Premises sub-committee for the SUE Community Facility. **Appendix 1.** Cllr Johns acknowledged the role of TTJFC within the community, stating that the TC has supported the club over a long period of time through grant funding and free of charge use of both Towcester Recreation Ground and the Towcester Youth & Community Centre. He agreed that the primary use of the sports pitches at the new site would be for football. However, as there are no other community facilities serving the new SUE development, consideration must be given to other user groups and he would expect all interested parties to work collaboratively.

Cllr Askew suggested that the sports pitches should provide an opportunity for other types of use, and not be exclusively for football.

Cllr Wixon expressed frustration at the delay in the transfer of facilities in the SUE and having these opened for use.

Cllr Macaulay said he would like to see community collaboration between all key users.


Cllr Clubley expressed support for the sub-committee's recommendation.

Cllr Dando L'Olive stated that TTJFC would be the primary users of the sports pitches and changing facilities but is keen that no person or group is excluded from benefiting from the new facility.

Cllr Allen reiterated the comments of Cllr Johns, adding that the TC should retain responsibility for managing the new facility for the benefit of the whole community. He raised concerns that limited parking at the site would make it an unsuitable venue for larger tournaments.

Proposal

Cllr Lynch proposed that the TC approves the sub-committee's recommendation (Appendix 1) for the TC to retain responsibility for managing the facility and as part of this to agree Primary Partnership status for key user groups; Seconded by Cllr Allen. 12 votes in favour; 1 abstention; proposal carried.


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4. Town Mayor's Items

To receive a report from the Town Mayor on events she has recently attended

Cllr Dando L'Olive reported that she has already attended several events since being elected as Town Mayor. These included Northampton's Oak Apple Day, to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the Great Fire of Northampton; Brackley Town Council's 'Robing Ceremony' for its new Town Mayor; and awards presentations at the Towcester Town Junior Football Club's Annual Tournament.

5. Minutes of Meetings

To approve the Minutes of the following meetings to signing by the Chair:-

Town Council Meeting – Monday, 14th April 2025

PROPOSAL

Cllr Lynch proposed that the Minutes of the TC Meeting held on Monday, 14th April 2025 be signed by the Chair as a true record; seconded by Cllr Tarbun; all in favour.

Annual Meeting of the Town Council (incorporating the inauguration of the Town Mayor 2025/26) – Monday, 19th May 2025

PROPOSAL

Cllr Godwin proposed that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council (incorporating the inauguration of the Town Mayor 2025/26) held on Monday, 19th May 2025 be signed by the Chair as a true record; Seconded by Cllr Askew; all in favour.

6. Matters Arising from the MinutesMinute Page 25/04/048:

Health & Wellbeing Strategy. The Clerk reported that the meeting with WNC Public Health Officer, Emily Burton, had been rescheduled to 18th June. A further meeting has been arranged for 15th July with WNC Officers Alan Burns, Community Cohesion Officers Rachel Wheeler and Sophie Ellidge and Youth Engagement Co-ordinator, Hafi Rahman.

Local Flood Forum: No reply has been received from the Environment Agency; however, the Clerk has received notification from the WNC Senior Flood Risk Officer, Louisa Clark, which confirms that investigations are being conducted into the flooding which occurred in 2024. The Clerk will await further information, which she will report back to the TC and share with the affected parties who have been in contact.

WNC Highways footpath resurfacing works in Towcester: The Clerk referred to the response from WNC Highways to complaints raised in relation to the poor standard of workmanship for resurfacing of footpaths within Towcester. This states that the complaints received are being investigated and the works will not be signed off by WNC until a satisfactory inspection has been completed.

Minute Page 25/04/049:

Jardines Pharmacies in Towcester: This item was taken up by former TC Cllr Klaus Bond. He has copied the Clerk into a response from a representative of the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) which confirms that it is in discussions with the owner of Jardines Pharmacy over required improvements. A form has also been forwarded to the Clerk which can be utilised by individuals for the reporting of specific complaints to the ICB.

Daventry Dolphins Swimming Academy. Following communications with the WNC Leisure Contracts Manager, Andrew Wallace, it was not possible to resolve the booking issue whereby the swimming academy retained its preferred slot on a Tuesday evening. However, an agreement has been now been reached between Towcester Centre for Leisure and Daventry Dolphins Swimming Club with the class due to move to a Thursday evening going forward.

CLOSED SESSION (25/04/050). TYCC: The Clerk followed up again with WNC on the proposed Riverside Resource Centre site meeting and has been advised that SNVB has now been granted occupancy under a Tenancy at Will. She has been put in touch with the CEO of SNVB to obtain agreement for access to view the premises.

7. West Northamptonshire Councila) Report back from representatives of West Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Tarbun confirmed he had been appointed to the WNC Non-strategic Planning Committee. He reported that WNC has stated that the Deed of Transfer for all SUE assets are now ready.

Cllr Tolley reported that he had been appointed to the WNC Parenting and Education Committee, adding that becoming a WNC Cllr is a steep learning curve and he had attended lots of training sessions.

Cllr Little reported that he had been appointed to the Audit and Pensions Committee. He stated that he had met with Tom Holland of Holland Build, the building contractor responsible for the new SUE Community Facility. He asked why

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the TC was holding up the transfer of the facility, since the building had been signed off by [the contractor-appointed] building control assessor. Cllr Little was informed that an independent FRA commissioned by the TC had identified areas of non-compliance which required resolution.

- b) To note the written report from the Brackley & Towcester Town Centre Manager (TCM), Samantha Hosking
The TC noted the written report. **See Appendix 2.** The report confirms that the next meeting of the Town Centre Business Networking Group will be at 5:30pm on Wednesday, 9th July in The Bull.
The TC noted Samantha's resignation and wished her well in her new role. Cllr Clubley stated that the responsibilities of the role will be handed over to the Inward Investment Team and not the S106 Team.

Proposal

Cllr Clubley proposed that the TC requests a meeting with the Inward Investment Team Leader, Lisa Devayya, and the S106 Team Leader, to ascertain what S106 funding remains in the allocation for the TCM role and how this can best be utilised; seconded by Cllr Allen; all in favour.

8. Reports back from the Chair of the:-

Resources & Planning Committee: Cllr Clubley had nothing to report.

Premises Committee: The Clerk reported that she is liaising with the TC Consultant, Ross Ingham of Ingham Pinnock, on a meeting date in July for the Full Council to discuss the next steps for the Town Hall Restoration Project.

Recreation & Leisure Committee: The Clerk reported that one of the newly installed seats on Towcester Recreation Ground had been burnt to the ground after approximately 4 weeks. This was reported to the Police and a crime reference number obtained. It was not viable to claim this on the TC insurance and arrangements were made for the seat to be replaced in time for the TTJFC tournament.

Cemetery & Allotments Committee: The Clerk reported that further issues with anti-social behaviour in the St. Lawrence Churchyard had resulted in the destruction of a greenhouse belonging to one of the TC allotment holders, with heavy items (wood/bricks) being thrown over the boundary wall from the churchyard side. The Clerk has contacted the SN Policing Team to request that patrols of this area be increased again.

Personnel Committee: Cllr Lynch had nothing to report.

9. Reports back from Local Bodies & the Police Liaison Representative for Towcester

To receive an update from the Clerk as PLR on issues relating to Policing and Community Safety:

There was nothing to report from the PLR in addition to the above.

Reports Back from Local Bodies:

Northamptonshire VCSE: Cllr Wixon stated that the focus is on encouraging young people to take up more outdoor activities. There is to be another Community Conversation meeting in July, to which the Town Mayor and Clerk have been invited. Both confirmed they have yet to receive an invitation.

Marie Weller Primary School: Cllr Wixon reported that the school is holding an official 'Open Day' on Monday, 14th July to which everyone is invited.

SNYE: Cllr Johns reported that the organisation had been successful in its application to the National Lottery, securing funding for the next three years.

10. Vacancy on Towcester Mill Ward

- a) To consider the application/s received for co-option to the Town Council's vacancy on Towcester Mill Ward

The application from Stewart Tolley had been circulated to all TC members prior to the meeting.

Proposal

Cllr Wixon proposed that Cllr ^{Stewart} Tolley be co-opted to the Town Council vacancy on Towcester Mill Ward; Seconded by Cllr Reynolds; all in favour.

- b) To note the vacancy on Towcester Brook Ward following the 'Failure to Accept Office' of an elected member
The Clerk has reported that she has received no contact from Kevin Adams, despite an initial offer to call in to discuss his election to the TC and hand-delivering paperwork for the annual meeting, which included the deadline for forms to be returned. Therefore, the seat became vacant with effect from 19th May (Annual Meeting of the Town Council). If no election is requested by 16/06/25 this vacancy can be co-opted to.

12. FINANCE & AUDIT

- a) To approve the Internal Audit Report for the Year Ending 31/03/2025.

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The Clerk highlighted to the TC the 'No' response to Question L on the Internal Audit Report, which has since been rectified but will need to be explained to the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, as an oversight during migration of information from the old to new website.

Proposal

Cllr Godwin proposed that the Internal Audit Report for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 be approved; Seconded by Cllr Lynch; all in favour.

- b) To approve the Towcester Town Council Accounts for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 for signing by the Chair.

Proposal

Cllr Reed proposed that the TC Accounts for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 be approved for signing by the Chair and R. F. O; seconded by Cllr Godwin; all in favour.

- c) To approve the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 for signing by the Chair and R.F.O.:-

- i) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

The TC noted, as per above, the need to respond 'No' to Question 4 and provide an explanation to PKF Littlejohn.

Proposal

Cllr Allen proposed that the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 be approved for signing by the Chair and R.F.O.; seconded by Cllr Johns; all in favour.

- ii) Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25

Proposal

Cllr Allen proposed that the Accounting Statement for the Year Ending 31/03/2025 be approved for signing by the Chair and R.F.O.; seconded by Cllr Johns; all in favour.

- d) To note the renewal of the Town Council's insurance policy for the period 01/06/2025 to 31/05/2026.

The Clerk reported that a 3-year fixed price premium had been agreed with Clear Councils on behalf of Ecclesiastical. The annual premium of £9,906.00 represents an increase of £108.80 on 2024/25. It appears from the documentation issued, that past claims (for subsidence-related property damage) have been resolved.

13. Brook Health Centre/Towcester Medical Centre: Patient Parking

To note the responses received from WNC Highways, and the Practice Managers of Brook Health Centre and Towcester Medical Centre with respect to the ongoing issue of dangerous parking on Swinneyford Road and the lack of dedicated parking for patients

The Clerk referred to the response received from WNC Highways, suggesting the solution to this issue would be the addition of double yellow lines to prevent parking near to the junctions. This action was not supported by the Medical Centres, which raised concerns that vulnerable patients would be required to park too away as a result. The consensus of TC members was that the former Ridgway House site, which is in the ownership of WNC, could present an opportunity to address the parking issues, at least in the short-term.

Proposal

Cllr Allen proposed that the TC approaches WNC to enquire about the use of the former Ridgway House site as an interim arrangement to address the issue of inadequate parking for Brook Health Centre and Towcester Medical Centre; seconded by Cllr Godwin; all in favour.

CLOSED SESSION

Cllr Lynch proposed that, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed concerning:-

- Towcester SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches: To receive an update from the Clerk on issues relating to the Fire Risk Assessment and agree upon how to proceed.
- Town Hall Tenants: Bartram & Co Estate & Letting Agents.

The meeting concluded at 9:30pm

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APPENDIX 1 – Statement from the Premises sub-committee regarding the SUE Community Facility

APPENDIX 2 – Town Centre Manager's Report, June 2025

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Towcester SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches

Town Council Meeting – Monday, 9th June 2025

Agenda Item 11

To consider the recommendations/s from the Town Council's Sub-committee for the SUE Community Building & Sports Pitches, having given due consideration to the responses submitted to the formerly agreed consultation survey on the future use of the facility and the proposal put forward by the Towcester Town Football Club.

The committee would like to begin by recognising that the primary use of the sports pitches and changing facilities will be for football and the Town Council is committed to working collaboratively with our Towcester-based clubs to achieve an optimal solution.

Headline analysis of data from the survey responses demonstrated excitement for a community centre within the SUE and respondents were equally spread across Towcester. In total there were 503 respondents, many of which reported they would regularly use the facility weekly or several days a week, with the use types summarised below:-

- Outdoor sports
- Indoor sports
- Health & Wellbeing activities
- Children's parties
- Community groups
- Private functions
- Youth groups
- Art & Music events
- Educational activities
- Fundraising events
- Public consultations
- Business meetings
- Commercial sales events

A majority of respondents reported that they find out about our community facilities by word of mouth indicating that the TC needs to increase publicity for its facilities.

Although the TC did not invite proposals for management of the facility, the Sub-committee has reviewed the proposal submitted by Towcester Town Football Club.

The Sub-committee does not recommend the TC awards a tenancy of the facility to a third party.

The Sub-committee considers that fair allocation of use of the sports pitches and changing facilities can be achieved effectively through the formation of a Primary Partnership Group comprising of all Towcester-based football clubs to deliver an agreed, collaborative proposal for hire to the TC. This would allow the clubs to manage allocations of pitches/equipment between them based upon key fixtures and would include other TC resources, i.e. Towcester

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Recreation Ground. The Northamptonshire Football Association has already agreed to mediate between the football clubs to achieve equitable arrangements.

There is potential for Primary Partnership status to also be offered to additional hire groups which deliver comparable or complementary services, i.e. health and well-being activities.

Groups with Primary Partnership status would be encouraged to become part of a steering group which will be formed to oversee the management of the facility going forward.

The Sub-committee would like to make a proposal to the TC that the Sub-committee approaches representatives of each football club with to create a Primary Partnership Group that is equitable and fair, with the assistance of the Northamptonshire FA, and that this Primary Partnership Group presents an agreed, collaborative proposal to the TC for hire of the sports pitches/changing facilities.

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Town Centre Manager Report – S Hosking

Towcester Town Council Meeting - 9 June 2025

It is with regret that I will be leaving West Northamptonshire Council to take up a new post, and that my last working day as Towcester's Town Centre Manager will be Wednesday 18 June 2025.

I will be handing over all information and contacts in a full report to the Economic Growth and Inward Investment team at West Northamptonshire Council. If you have any questions or comments about the role and Towcester S106 town funds going forward, my manager, Lisa Devayya would be happy to help you.

It has been a pleasure working with the Town Council, businesses and the local community in this role and I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for all your help.

Vacant Properties: Work is continuing to gather details of landlords, agents and understanding barriers to letting, particularly for long-term empty properties. This engagement to help resolve these barriers will be ongoing, and wherever possible the Economic Growth team and Iain Nicholson (PRBI – Vacant Shops Academy) will work towards resolving issues and connecting potential new businesses with agents and landlords.

Easter Town Centre Community stalls/entertainment feedback – Event took place on 12 April. Mayor Cllr Reynolds kindly attended to support the event and speak with the community police team. A local musician coordinated several busking-style acts with other local performers aged 16-80. The musicians were well received and TCM heard from passersby that there should be more of this type of activity. Thank you to café's in Sponne Arcade and Whittons Lane who assisted. SNYE hosted children's activities in the Town Hall, and these were also well received. Unfortunately, some stalls were absent due to volunteer shortages. Weather was good, but footfall remained modest. Businesses had asked for a Spring/Easter event to help draw people in, but Easter school holidays are difficult to gauge. Afternoon activity was stronger in Whittons Lane; the morning was busier in Sponne Arcade. The lack of a market place in Towcester remains a challenge for being able to host successful central town events.

SNYE Easter town centre trail - plenty of families participated on the 12 April and the following week. There were communication issues with the Museum, which will be addressed for future events.

Future Events - Large town events do bring people in, particularly to hospitality businesses, but these smaller activities, help to bring some vibrancy to the town centre to give visitors a positive experience, encourage them to stay longer, visit cafes and browse shops. But these do need to take place more regularly and involve a wide variety of local organisations/musicians/bands/choirs – so that it becomes known that Towcester is a lively place to visit.

Pre-loved/bric-a-brac Market – The TCM has been speaking with local charity shops who would like to put on a joint 'pre-loved/bric-a-brac' market in Sponne Arcade, this would be a great idea and can include perhaps a local music group. Sponne Arcade management team, agree to this idea in principle.

Towcester Food and Drink Market – The TCM has been working with local stall holder, Alfred Ballington and the Rotary Farmers Market team to consider hosting a weekend market in Towcester, in a similar position to the Farmers Market. The High Street public survey indicated that most respondents wanted to see Christmas and Food Markets. A quarterly seasonal food market could start 31 August, another could take place in November and be advertised as a Christmas market. Alfred has suggested that the market should be on a Sunday – to make use of the car park when it's not as busy in town. Retailers feel it should be on Saturday to support them, but on

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Sunday it could support hospitality businesses. The survey results showed that more respondents wanted a market on a Saturday, than on any other day of the week, but that Sunday was also popular. However, both retailers and hospitality businesses felt that to encourage people from the market into Watling Street and beyond, something else needs to draw them - e.g. special deals in those businesses.

Spodne Arcade Management have agreed in principle for markets to flow through the arcade, making use of wider pedestrian areas, drawing people towards Watling Street and reducing pressure on car park parking spaces.

Several Farmers Market traders are interested in taking part and most were in favour, as long as the Food & Drink Markets dates were not too close to Farmers Market Fridays.

The Rotary Club cannot commit to managing another market but are happy to share current farmers' market planning details and could potentially provide a couple of volunteers. A trader-led model is being explored, pending licensing discussions. Town Council support as organiser would be welcome if that is possible. However, the TCM will provide traders with WNC contacts for continued support.

Heritage Open Days - September

Andy Roberts, coordinates events across West Northants, and will be the main contact for Towcester. It would be helpful if the Museum could be fully engaged with the event this year and hold a significant event. The heritage buses will be bringing visitors from Northampton again, so it is a great opportunity to promote the Museum. Also, it would be nice to extend the heritage offer with an exhibition in the Town Hall, could the Town Council consider asking a relevant local group to host an exhibition around architectural heritage of Towcester, (the theme of the national event in 2025)?

Town Centre Trails

Popular with families and with businesses, who are always willing to display posters or items for a trail and sponsor prizes. Trails to be planned for summer holidays and through November, on the lead up to Christmas. This could be something that the Town Centre Traders forum can organise, but a Town Council trail in aid of the mayor's charities, as in previous years, would be welcome.

Future of Town Centre Trader meetings

Attendance is still low for traders' meetings (approx. 5 – often different owners), yet face-to-face engagement with TCM and among businesses is still robust. At the recent meeting the TCM asked traders if they wanted to continue the meetings, those in attendance agreed that yes, they were useful for local businesses to connect with each other. These meetings will continue as a Town Centre business networking group, which can be managed by businesses, with WNC and Town Council attending to engage, update and listen to issues and ideas. It is important to maintain this communication between businesses and between the businesses and Councillors/ reps of both authorities. Next meeting is planned for 9 July 5.30pm in The Bull. Christine (landlady of The Bull/Creations of the Heart owner) is hosting the gathering and Stuart (CAT5) is going to speak to other business owners throughout the town centre to encourage attendance.

Signage

Work on parking and Whittons Lane signage continues, subject to budget availability and permissions.

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