

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE **COMMUNITY & HERITAGE COMMITTEE** HELD ON **WEDNESDAY 2nd APRIL 2025** AT **6:30 P.M.** AT NEWTON'S PLACE, WOLBOROUGH STREET, NEWTON ABBOT.

PRESENT Councillors: L Cooke - (Chairperson) Presiding
M Ryan - (Vice Chairperson)

Councillors: B Bailey A Hall (Mayor)
 J Bradford A Ineson
 R Buscombe M Joyce
 C Davieson C Parker (Deputy Mayor)
 A Gibbs P Parker

Also, in attendance Councillor J Bradford

Officers in attendance: Sam Scott - Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Linda McGuirk - Principal Administrator
Thomas Collard - Green Spaces Officer
Pierre Doutreligne – Projects & Strategy Officer
Kevin Tagg – Facilities Maintenance Officer Team Leader
Nigel Canham - Communications Advisor

By Invitation: Freeman Mr Michael Hocking
1 x Representative of the Plot Hub CIC
1 x Member of the public

484. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

A valid reason for absence was received on behalf of Councillor L Wood.

485. INTERESTS

Councillor M Ryan declared an interest in agenda item 6, Facilities Maintenance Report as he is related to a member of the Facilities Maintenance Team.

486. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community and Heritage Committee held on 5th February 2025 were received and signed as a correct record.

487. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

488. PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF PLOT HUB CIC

The Chairperson, Councillor Louise Cooke welcomed the representative of the Plot Hub CIC to the meeting and invited him to make a presentation to the Committee. The

representative displayed a visual presentation on the large screen giving an overview of the organisation and highlighted the following three key areas of focus:

- Food & Drink
 - Community Kitchen
 - Free daily pastries & soup
 - Homeless support
 - Reducing food waste
 - Classes and workshops to support cookery skills

- Art & Culture
 - Community Event Space
 - Workshops
 - Exhibitions and Performances
 - Web 3 networking and co working space

- Business & Enterprise
 - Food Drink Incubator, business advice and support
 - Rent a shelf
 - Uniform exchange
 - Monthly Sunday Markets
 - Awards

The representative provided an explanation for the transition of his business from a deli to a Community Interest Company (CIC), citing a significant issue of loneliness within the community. In response, he sought to create a welcoming space designed to address this concern. A strong partnership has been established with THAT Food Bank, facilitating initiatives such as the provision of free meals and hot drinks, as well as a 'pay it forward' scheme to support those in need.

The representative is holding a Newton Abbot Business & Community Awards on September 12th at Newton Abbot Racecourse to celebrate exceptional achievements, innovation and contributions of local businesses. This will be an annual event to recognise organisations and individuals who drive economic growth, embrace community spirit and inspire excellence. The event has attracted 150 nominations so far!

In addition, the representative has established a successful monthly Sunday Market, to shine a spotlight on local producers, celebrating diversity and quality of their products. The Market includes live music acts and entertainment. Aspires to increase the market provision to two Sundays a month.

The Projects & Strategy Officer reported that the current district council street market, held on Wednesdays, has experienced low trader participation. Additionally, the retirement of the District Council's Markets Manager, with no plans for a replacement, raises concerns about the market's potential decline. It was suggested that NATC seek permission to assume responsibility for the Wednesday market from the District Council.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his inspiring presentation and invited members to ask questions. Councillors asked about:

- Daily provision of free pastries and soup.
- Recognised the strong partnership working with local organisations.
- The success of the Sunday Markets and asked what support the representative needed from the Town Council to expand the market provision in the town.
- The negative impact the increase of parking charges has had on the town.
- Expanding the provision of uniform exchange to include fancy dress.

Arising from the discussion

RESOLVED that the Projects & Strategy Officer investigates the feasibility of Newton Abbot Town Council assuming responsibility for the operation and management of street markets from Teignbridge District Council.

489. **FACILITIES MAINTENANCE REPORT**

The Chairperson, Councillor Louise Cooke, welcomed the Facilities Maintenance Team Leader (FMTL) to the meeting and invited him to present a report to members on the utilisation of the Citymaster and Foamstream machines. A visual presentation was displayed on the large screen to support the presentation.

The FMTL reported on:

- Key targeted areas.
- Work carried out across the Wards, 139 visits to 87 separate locations.
- Frequency of work carried out in the various Wards.
- 13 tonnes of waste removed from the streets of Newton Abbot.
- Citymaster has totalled 145 operating hours, 339 miles over an 8-month period.
- Collaboration projects i.e. Tunnels of Love and Keyberry Underpass.

In addition, the team are due to start working on additional projects:

- Golden Lion Square refurbishment project.
- Dredging of Leat.
- Rebuild Leat wall.

The Chairperson thanked the FMTL for his presentation and invited members to pose any questions:

- How many days the Citymaster is being used and options to increase.
- Potential to expand service provision and increase resources.
- State of Courtenay Street, concentrating on Town Centre area.
- Type of work being carried out.
- Working patterns.
- Cllr J Bradford – thank you Keyberry Road tidy up. Request for College Ward to be visited.

- Give Councillors advance notice of when working in their wards.
- Can we operate at developments with unadopted highways?
- Press release to raise profile of the work being undertaken.
- Opportunity to lease equipment to neighbouring parishes.
- Run a competition to name the Citymaster.
- Impact of devolution.

RESOLVED that the Town Council shall organise and oversee a competition to name of the Citymaster.

Members acknowledged the outstanding results achieved within the community and expressed their sincere appreciation to the Facilities Maintenance Team for their dedication and hard work.

Councillor J Bradford left the meeting.

490. **BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP**

- a) The Green Spaces Officer reported that the first meeting of the Biodiversity Working Group had taken place. One of the group's initial actions was to review the adopted Biodiversity Policy. Members were invited to consider the revised Policy, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Biodiversity Policy be hereby approved and adopted.

- b) The Green Spaces Officer reminded members that as part of the action plan contained in the adopted Biodiversity Policy, Minute number 24/01(372), the Council has agreed to carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.

A report, circulated prior to the meeting, outlining quotes for the audit work was discussed and considered.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council will proceed with option one, as outlined in the Biodiversity Audit Report, to include:

- Walkover surveys of the key sites.
- Assessment of habitat value and potential for biodiversity enhancement.
- Species surveys of freshwater invertebrates and amphibians in certain locations.
- Recommendations for planting, habitat management, and biodiversity improvements.

491. GRASS VERGE MANAGEMENT

The Green Spaces Officer highlighted areas of the Grass Verge Management Report, as circulated prior to the meeting, which provided information on current grass verge management practice in Newton Abbot, and how evidence-based decision making can be used to implement a wildlife conscious approach to future management. As part of the Biodiversity Policy, the Council has identified Grass Cutting as a medium-term priority in the action plan, with the aim of improving current management practices to have a more wildlife conscious approach.

Members discussed the report and highlighted the importance of informing residents of any changes to grass verge management and the reasons why.

Freeman Mike Hocking raised concerns about areas managed by different local authorities and their differing approach. Stating that any changes must be managed properly as grass cutting has been neglected for too long.

Councillors agreed that problems with multiple contractors and the volume of cars parking on grass verges was problematic.

Arising from the discussion, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council will consult with local ecologists and conservation organisations to identify suitable verges for wildlife-conscious management. A pilot scheme will be introduced in selected locations, incorporating advice on cutting frequency, timing, arisings removal and reseeded where necessary. Community engagement will be a priority to ensure residents are informed and supportive of changes. A review will be conducted after the first and second year to assess ecological and financial impacts before wider implementation (several years may be required to allow the wildflower meadows to establish).

492. ALLOTMENTS SUB COMMITTEE

- a) **Proposed Improvements to Cookes Field** – The Green Spaces Officer reported that a review of the lease terms between the Council and the landowner had identified ambiguities regarding responsibility for maintaining the access path to Cookes Field. The landowner has been contacted, and a response is awaited concerning the proposed improvements to the access track.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Green Spaces Officer undertake further investigations into potential improvements to the access of Cookes Field allotments.

- b) Members were invited to consider providing financial support for a water harvesting project at the Decoy allotment field at a cost of £2,300. It was noted that water harvesting is an identified action within the Council's Biodiversity Policy.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that Newton Abbot Town Council agrees to grant the sum of £2,300 to the Newton Abbot District Allotment Association in support of the water harvesting project at the Decoy Allotment Site, in alignment with the Council's Biodiversity Policy.

- c) **Allotments Complaints Policy & Procedure** - The Green Spaces Officer introduced the Allotments Complaints Policy & Procedure, as circulated prior to the meeting and invited members to ask any questions. No questions were raised.

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Allotments Complaints Policy & Procedure be hereby approved and adopted.

Cllr A Gibbs abstained from voting.

Members expressed their thanks to the Green Spaces Officer for his hard work since his employment in January 2025 and recognised the positive impact of his work to date.

493. **SUB-COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/FORUMS**

- a) The Minutes of the meeting of the What's In Store (WIS) Project Board held on 24th February 2025, as presented by the Chairperson, Councillor M Ryan, were received and approved.

Councillor Ryan gave a brief update on the WIS project:

- 17th March - Development Phase Review - the process reviews how the project has progressed to see whether it is viable to continue to apply for funding for the next stage. The Curator has advised that this stage has been passed, and the application form released. The application deadline is 28th May with the decision expected at the end of September.
 - Delivery Phase to begin in November 2025.
 - Build to commence in April 2026.
- b) The Minutes of the meeting of the Allotment Sub Committee held on 5th March 2025, as presented by the Chairperson, Councillor M Ryan, were received and approved.
- c) The Minutes of the meeting of the Biodiversity Working Group held on 24th February 2025, as presented by the Green Spaces Officer, Thomas Collard, were received and approved.

494. **ACCOUNTS/INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

The Committee received and noted an overview of income and expenditure for the Community & Heritage Committee, Newton In Bloom and the Museum for the periods 1st April 2024 to 28th February 2025.

The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) reported that the questions submitted in advance of the meeting had been addressed satisfactorily. The RFO reminded members that in accordance with Minute number 25/03(462a) that any remaining Museum budget is earmarked to offset any shortfall in funding for the What's In Store Project. In addition, Members discussed carrying forward any remaining Community & Heritage Committee budget.

Arising from the discussion, it was:

RESOLVED that the Town Council hereby:

- a) Approves the Income and Expenditure Statements for the periods, 1st April 2024 to 28th February 2025 for the:
- Community and Heritage Committee.
 - Newton In Bloom.
 - Museum.

And

- b) That any remaining budget for the Community & Heritage Committee be carried forward.

495. LATE CORRESPONDENCE

None.

496. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 11th June 2025.

The Chairperson, Councillor L Cooke expressed her excitement at the current success of the Town Council working at the heart of its community.

The Meeting closed at: 20:00

Chairperson.....Date.....