

**MINUTES OF THE
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

Monday 31st March 2025 at 7pm

held at the Civic Centre

Councillor Stacie Allensby, the Mayor of Warminster

Present:

Councillors: S Allensby, A Cooper, A Davis, S Fraser, J Jones, P Keeble, J Kirkwood, E Lee, P Macfarlane, B Parks, and C Robbins.

Officers: T Dommett (Town Clerk), J Halls (Deputy Town Clerk), P Clover (Committee Clerk), W Bradley (Communications Officer).

Public and press: 34 members of the public and one member of the press.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Brett, and from Geoff Thomas from Westbury and Warminster Talking Newspapers, Bethan Matthews from Wiltshire Search and Rescue, Jacquelyn Bevan from Trio Paradis Café Concerts, Cathie Sale from St John's Hall, Annie Davis from Warminster Action Group, and Barry Mole from Warminster Community Radio, all of whom provided written reports which were read out during the meeting.

2. Minutes from last Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the last Annual Town Meeting held at the Civic Centre on Monday 8th April 2024 were accepted and signed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Allensby looked back on her incredible year as Mayor of Warminster which she spent delivering for Warminster and its residents with her fellow town councillors and officers.

One of Cllr Allensby's personal highlights was her appointment as a council Youth Champion as one of her passions is helping and supporting Warminster's young people. She explained that last May the council had entered into an agreement with Warminster and Westbury Youth Club for 50 weeks a year of detached youth worker provision. This had proved to be such a great success that the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Action Fund agreed to provide additional funding to increase the number of hours of youth worker provision in Warminster.

Cllr Allensby stated that it had been an honour for her to lay a wreath on behalf of the town council at the annual Remembrance Day service, expressing her pride in the number of Warminster residents standing in support of the brave members of the town's armed forces.

Cllr Allensby was delighted by the number of exciting events organised by the council in 2024, the highlight being the centenary celebrations for the Lake Pleasure Grounds which saw thousands of people enjoy fantastic live music and an amazing airborne pyrotechnic display. She commented that the Ice Cream and Bubbles Festival and Pumpkins in the Park had been huge successes mentioning the responsibility of judging over 100 pumpkins and the incredible number of different flavours of ice cream!

Cllr Allensby thanked her fellow councillors, the town's volunteers and the council's officers for their ongoing hard work for the residents of Warminster as the town looked forward to the elections on 1st May.

The Full Warminster Town Council Annual Report is available from:

<https://warminster-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Annual-Report-2024-2025-Final.pdf>

4. 2024 -2025 Grant Recipients

4.1 Warminster Alzheimer's Support – Julian Roberts

Julian Roberts spoke to the effect of the grant received from the Warminster Town Council on Wiltshire's homegrown dementia charity, thanking the council for the funding which had been used to provide 60 days' worth of daytime activities for those living with dementia, respite for their carers, and support groups which are held in the Old Silkworks.

4.2 Westbury and Warminster Youth Club – Cllr Jack Jones

Cllr Jack Jones explained that the grant received from Warminster Town Council had enabled 39 activity sessions to be run during term time, providing various activities for young people in Warminster.

4.3 Warminster and Westbury Talking Newspapers

Geoff Thomas was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report explaining that the Talking Newspaper had recently ceased and donated its equipment and remaining funds – Appendix A.

4.4 Warminster Walkers – Heather Yates

The grant provided by Warminster Town Council had been used to purchase additional first aid kits and to facilitate more regular updates on the Warminster Walkers' website, attracting more walkers.

4.5 Warminster and District Stroke Club – Gwen Kent

Gwen Kent thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant which had been awarded to the Stroke Club. The club offers various weekly events involving speakers, musicians and entertainment, and providing activities such as board games, astronomy, and flower

arranging.

4.6 Wessex MS Therapy Centre – Sarah Folker

Wessex MS Therapy Centre has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. The grant had been used to fund the counselling service offered by the centre which was described as a wonderful cause and a lifeline for members.

4.7 Group Five – Martin Sandford

Group Five is a 35-year-old charity serving the five market towns of west Wiltshire. Their aim is to address bed, kitchen and furniture poverty by collecting donations of furniture, small electrical items etc. and distributing them to those in need based on referrals. This means that items are saved from landfill and recycled/ reused. 74 individuals and families in Warminster were helped by the charity last year.

4.8 Warminster Town Football Club – Shirley Moriarty

Shirley Moriarty explained that following concerns over the security of the club's premises, an application for grant funding had been made to Warminster Town Council which was used to replace the building's windows.

4.9 Wiltshire Search and Rescue

Bethan Matthews was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report thanking Warminster Town Council for their generosity which had enabled them to begin the design of a bespoke interior set of shelving, lights and racking for their new equipment vehicle – Appendix B.

4.10 Warminster and Westbury Visually Impaired Club – Steve Kervell

Steve Kervell expressed gratitude for the grant provided by Warminster Town Council which had helped the club to avoid imposing an increase to their subscriptions which have been held at 2022 levels, repair the club's speaker system, and maintain a high standard of entertainment at the weekly meetings for members.

4.11 Open Door Warminster – Mark Wilson

Mark Wilson, a volunteer for the Prostate Cancer Chat Café, gave an update on the peer help and support provided by the group which meets twice a month at The Athenaeum. He expressed his thanks to Warminster Town Council for the grant which has been used to help fund the support group.

4.12 We Are Men (WAM) – Zanne Marchmont

WAM was set up in 2023 and is open to any male aged over 18 going through difficult times or with mental health issues. WAM's aim is to create friendship groups and to get people talking. Meetings are held at Warminster Football Club, who provide the venue free of charge. The majority of the grant awarded by the council has been spent on more regular marketing mostly through social media, which has resulted in a 57% increase in attendance at meetings. 72% of the group's followers are now male and engagement with social media had increased to 23,000 views and visits last month.

4.13 Trio Paradis Café Concerts

Jacquelyn Bevan was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report thanking Warminster Town Council for the grant awarded to them which had been used for venue hire and travel costs particularly at the Athenaeum – Appendix C.

4.14 Salisbury Plain Rights of Way Volunteers – Nigel Linge

Nigel Linge thanked Warminster Town Council for their ongoing support which had funded the ongoing maintenance of local Rights of Way (ROWs), the purchase of 40 destination signs and a new lawn mower, which is used to mow 15 ROWs. An additional seven signs and a cycleway sign had been installed with funding from Wiltshire Council's Area Board and Longleat. Nigel Linge recognised the contribution made by the council's Basil Brushes which clears ROWs 91 and 89.

4.15 Warminster Bowls Club – Claire MacCarron

Claire MacCarron described Warminster Bowling Club as a hidden gem. Health and wellbeing are at the forefront of the club's activities, helping with social isolation. A celebration of bowls is being held in May 2025; the club welcomes everyone over the age of 16 and is aiming to attract new members. The grant awarded by Warminster Town Council has helped to fund the installation of a new irrigation system which is in place for the 2025 season.

4.16 St John's Hall

Cathie Sale was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report expressing her gratitude for the grant awarded by Warminster Town Council which had been used towards the cost of a new boiler in the hall – Appendix D.

4.17 Warminster and Flers Twinning Association – Stewart Buckingham

Stewart Buckingham expressed gratitude for the grant from Warminster Town Council which has been used to promote and publicise the twinning association, to support events and to support the twinning visits between Warminster and Flers.

4.18 South West Ambulance Service Trust Fund – Vicky Griffiths and Kit Kline

As community first responder volunteers in Warminster, Vicky Griffiths and Kit Kline had launched a fund-raising campaign to buy a pulse oximeter and a raizer chair, used to lift people from the floor after a fall. The grant received from Warminster Town Council has made a really big difference and the equipment purchased genuinely helps to save lives.

4.19 Park Run Thoulstone Park – Cllr Jack Jones

Cllr Jack Jones spoke on behalf of Cllr Steve Jeffries. He explained that the weekly Park Run had been set up using the funding received from Warminster Town Council but was now self-funding. The event attracted 189 participants last weekend including an 85-year-old.

4.20 Warminster Action Group

Annie Davis was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report explaining that the grant awarded by Warminster Town Council had been used to equip and furnish the upstairs space in their new premises, to expand and support the services offered by the group and to begin developing new programmes – Appendix E.

5. Other Groups

5.1 St Lawrence Chapel – Ian Frostick

Ian Frostick expressed his thanks to Warminster Town Council for providing 50% of the funding towards a major overhaul and upgrade of the chapel's clock to improve its reliability and future proof it. The balance of the cost had been match funded. He explained that tours of the chapel and tower are provided on market days and ImberBus day; the clock and bells will be operational for the next independent market on 29th June. A celebration service will be held on 13th July.

5.2 The Athenaeum Centre – Jon Ellis

Jon Ellis thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant received which had been used to complete an upgrade of the stage technology including the lighting stage, microphones and dimmer packs, to support an inhouse group created to generate local talent and to pay for emergency repairs to the roof of the dance studio. He believes that the theatre is now one of the best equipped performance venues in the southwest.

5.3 Warminster Community Radio

Barry Mole was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report explaining that the Community Infrastructure Levy funds awarded by Warminster Town Council had enabled the station to upgrade and improve its studio equipment, thereby future-proofing it – Appendix F.

5.4 Warminster Cricket Club – John Powell

The grant received from Warminster Town Council, plus grants received from the England and Wales Cricket Board and Wiltshire Council's Area Board, had enabled the club to replace its toilet facilities and to provide disabled facilities. John Powell mentioned that the club now has over 90 5–11-year-old members and over 60 11–16-year-old members.

5.5 Warminster Rugby Club – Rob Rowbotham

Rob Rowbotham thanked Warminster Town Council for the grant which had been awarded to the club which had been used to purchase additional dark sky compliant temporary floodlights meaning that younger members could now train in the evenings and not just at weekends; the club has training groups for under 5s and under 17s and can also be used by other organisations.

5.6 Inspire Music Festival – Mike Heaton

Mike Heaton explained that the Inspire Music Festival is a one-day free music festival in July which showcases talent in Warminster. The grant awarded by Warminster Town Council was used to pay for hire of PA equipment, hire of toilets, security and Public Liability Insurance.

5.7 Warminster Book Festival – Mark Thorpe

The first Warminster Book Festival was held two years ago in the Park and the Civic Centre. Ongoing investment in authors, events, and stalls, which has been facilitated by the grant received from Warminster Town Council, will lead to a substantially bigger event which will

appeal to the whole community.

5.8 Warminster Business Network – Matt Towl

Matt Towl explained that the support and funding received from Warminster Town Council is raising the profile of Warminster and its businesses, with increased footfall. The network has over 200 members and new shops are opening in the town. It is estimated that an additional £750,000 has been generated for the local economy by the quarterly markets. Grants totalling £1,000 from Warminster Town Council's Tidy up Smarten up scheme have led to £10,000 investment by 10 local business in tidying up their shop fronts.

5.9 Warminster Carnival – Sam Ryall

Sam Ryall thanked Warminster Town Council for their ongoing support. The carnival costs £11,000 each year to organise. The grant is used to pay for marshals, stewards, first aiders, and advertising banners.

5.10 Warminster Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Cllr Phil Keeble

Cllr Phil Keeble explained that a consultation for housing site allocation is under way as part of the review of Warminster's existing Neighbourhood Plan (NHP). This has been prompted by a change in legislation which now gives five years' protection from speculative development to towns with a NHP which includes a housing site allocation. The results of the consultation will be incorporated into the draft NHP.

6. Forum

Cllr Allensby invited questions from members of the public on any subject related to the town or the Warminster Town Council.

The following questions were asked:

- **What is the council doing about the provision of a banking hub in Warminster**
Response:
Warminster doesn't meet the criteria for a banking hub at present – an additional cashpoint machine has been provided in Iceland and the town already has a post office and a building society.
- **What does the council know about the closure of the branch of WH Smith in Warminster**
Response:
The business may be sold as a going concern.

Len Turner gave his thanks to councillors at the end of the current four-year term of office and to officers, recognising the enormous contribution made by Warminster Town Council in supporting the local community and working together for the benefit of the town.

Cllr Allensby closed the meeting by thanking all the organisations that had taken the time to provide an update on the spending of the grant monies received by them and the positive impact it had on the residents of Warminster.

Meeting ended: 8:14pm

Signed..... Date.....