

Marlborough Town Council



Full Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Marlborough Town Council held Monday, 1 September 2025 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Emily Trow	Town Mayor
	Councillor Mark Luson	Deputy Mayor
	Councillor Nicholas Fogg	
	Councillor Mervyn Hall	
	Councillor Mark Cooper	
	Councillor Kymee Cleasby	Wiltshire Councillor – Marlborough East
	Councillor James Sheppard	
	Councillor Kelvyn Shantry	
	Councillor Susannah O'Brien	
	Councillor Caroline Sadler	
	Councillor Caroline Wrench	
	Councillor Nicholas Awbery	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
ALSO		
PRESENT	Councillor Jane Davies	Wiltshire Councillor – Marlborough West
	Neil Goodwin	Marlborough.News
	Plus five members of the public	

MOMENT OF QUIET REFLECTION

The **Town Mayor** asked Members to take a quiet moment to themselves to reflect on how Councillors can best serve their community, on anyone suffering at this time or experiencing loss or any problems.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Savernake Forest – Camp Site

Nick Beere, Nicola Birkett, Caroline Dale and Phil Birkett – had done some research into the recently announced closure of the Postern Hill camp site in Savernake Forest which Neil Goodwin would be able to corroborate, and asked:

- Were the Town Council formally consulted about the closure prior to the announcement by Sherwood Pines Ltd?
- What was the Town Council's understanding of the nature of the leasing agreement for the camp site and Forestry England's plans for its future? There seemed to be a conflict between what they were saying to the public and the reality.
- What was the Town Council's view on the closure of the camp site and the potential impact on the culture, facilities and economy of the town? Residents hoped the Town Council would support the campaign to keep it open to support local businesses.
- Could the camp site be considered as an asset of community value?

The Town Council had not been consulted about the closure.

The Town Council did not know the detail about any lease arrangements. It was not a party to it: the lease was a matter between the landowner, the Savernake Estate, and Forestry England who would need to answer those questions. Questions about Savernake Forest had come up before concerning the land management plan. Questions would need to be directed to Forestry England or the landowners. The camp site and forest were not in the Marlborough Parish; they were in Savernake Parish, so technically this wasn't something that the Town Council would be privy to.

Councillors shared concerns about the economic impact on the town and the loss of a healthy activity, and the long term plans for the forest and felt they had some responsibility to secure the future of the site. . The decision appeared to have been made without any reference to the wider constituency. Several years ago it had invited Forestry England to a Council meeting to make a presentation and answer questions and would like to ask them to come to another meeting to explain how the decision was made and outline their future plans for the forest.

The Town Council had successfully applied to have the former Methodist Church, Christ Church, listed as an asset of community value. It wasn't known whether a camp site would be eligible for this. **Councillor Cleasby** was also a Wiltshire Councillor, and the Savernake Parish falls within the Marlborough East area. She undertook to investigate whether it would meet the criteria as an asset of community value. While the campsite didn't fall within the Town Council's parish it could have a view.

The **Mayor** confirmed that the Town Council would conduct more research into the residents' questions and add an item to the next Full Council meeting agenda, inviting Forestry England to attend.

Neil Goodwin asked whether, rather than inviting Forestry England to present at a Full Council meeting, an open meeting could be set up involving Savernake Parish Council and all members of the public, perhaps in the Assembly Room at the Town Hall. The site closes for winter on 5 October, so there may not be much time: it would be great to have the campsite up and running again for next Spring. The **Deputy Mayor, Councillor Luson** acknowledged Mr Goodwin's suggestion and

supported the idea of a consultation with Forestry England but questioned whether that was the best way to elicit an open conversation about the future of the forest. He reassured him that the Town Council would seek to find the best way to have a conversation before the next Full Council meeting with the aim to ensure some kind of public camp site would be retained on the boundaries of the parish. The **Mayor** stated that Full Council would need to give this more consideration before calling an open meeting.

ACTION: At **Councillor Sheppard's** suggestion, to ask Savernake Parish Council to apply to list the site as an asset of community value

The Green

Nigel Kerton asked where the antique wrought iron chains that were previously attached to posts around The Green had gone; where they were now; whether there had been a motion passed to remove them, or whether they were removed as a decision made by staff; whether they had been sold; whether they had otherwise been disposed of (and the same applied to a gate and railings removed from the Cemetery). In his view they were worth tens of thousands of pounds. Were there minutes to confirm what had been done, or to show on whose authority they had been removed? He implied that a lot of things went into the Town Council's storage building and never came out again, including the blue Charter signs and said that if the Town Council was unable to answer his questions, he would raise the matter with the police and ask them to investigate. Mr Kerton wasn't concerned that they had been taken down if they were in safe storage. He said, "show me where they are and I'll drop the issue".

The **Mayor** referred to a photograph (displayed at the meeting) taken in July 2015 showing that the chains were not present at that time. A member of the public could see them on an image on Google maps dated 2011.

Longer serving Councillors had no recollection of this as it was a long time ago, nor of where they might be now.

Councillor Sheppard asked whether there was a statute of limitations on things that have happened in Councils many years before that present Councils couldn't be held responsible for as this seemed to be something that had been missing for many years and only just brought to Members' attention. He hoped they could be found but would still like to know whether there was any limitation.

The **Town Clerk** had already made some enquiries. The **Grounds Manager** had joined the staff in 2012 and did not remember there being any chains present at that time. As part of the project to extend the workshop, a big clear out had been undertaken very recently and he assured Mr Kerton that the chains were not in the workshop: the Town Clerk himself had been part of the clear-out. To answer the questions more fully the archives would have to be searched.

Mr Kerton then referred to an old photograph but the **Mayor** said that he had asked his question and it had been answered. He stated he was trying to give more background information but if the Mayor didn't want it he would resort to other

means to bring this to the attention of the public. The Mayor said she did not appreciate Mr Kerton threatening the Council.

Councillor Fogg recalled Walter Lawrence – born 1895 – telling him that he had fallen over the chains (present in the early years of the 20th Century) and cut his leg open very severely, so wondered if there were plans to replace them, whether there could be chains without the dangerous spikes.

Councillor Shantry suggested asking former Mayors from the period in question whether they had any memory of the chain removal.

ACTION: The **Town Mayor** confirmed the matter would be investigated as best as possible and reported back to Council

All members of the public left the meeting

CRIME AND DISORDER

In answer to a question from the **Mayor**, **PC Jason Steele** wasn't sure how far their records went back, but he would check whether there was any record of the chains being reported as stolen.

PC Steele introduced himself and thanked Councillors for their service. He outlined changes to personnel in the team: new members included Sergeant Debbie Lacock who would try to attend a future meeting. It was hoped that more posts would be filled in due course too.

Ongoing work included Marlborough Shop Watch which was going really well – he thanked the Town Clerk for his support with the scheme. Retail crime was still a priority for the neighbourhood team.

On community engagement, regular sessions took place at Nationwide, and the team had used the mobile unit, particularly to allow access for rural communities. If dates lined up it may be possible to have it over one of the Mop weekends.

Rural crime week would be w/c 8 September for the whole force, with a potential event on Wednesday 10 September being planned.

The team continues to work with housing associations to assist with action regarding tenant antisocial behaviour. They also continue to patrol areas where ASB has been raised as a concern: recently this included Plume of Feathers garden. Wiltshire Council's new ASB officer had joined the police to patrol the town and raise her awareness to potential hot spot areas.

He gave some updates on recent arrests and crimes, including a stop and search and an attempted ATM break in. Between June and August 107 crimes had been reported, a reduction on the same period last year at 130. A quarterly report would be produced in October with more detail.

PC Steele left the meeting

TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Davies referred to work by the previous Council, which had been unsuccessful in obtaining a banking hub for Marlborough, and wondered whether it would be minded to appeal the decision? Having got more involved with the Jubilee Centre, she knew that the manager was not comfortable queuing with cash at the Post Office, and having heard about the Tesco ATM being attacked having an alternative option for the town would be good and she would support Councillors in any way she could.

Councillor Hall noted that Lloyds Bank provided a service at the Library every Wednesday. They were unable to deal in cash or handle business accounts.

Councillor Sadler supported the call for a banking hub; many shops still take cash but there were also already some shops that would only take card payments. She didn't want the town to become cashless and hoped the appeal would go in their favour.

The **Town Clerk** knew the appeal request was pending and agreed to investigate.

Councillor Shantry asked about proposals to change how Utility street permits were issued, and the suggestion about charging 'lane rental' in an effort to reduce disruption times. Were Wiltshire Councillors optimistic this could be achieved? Both Wiltshire Councillors were attending a meeting later in the month with the Leader of the Council to discuss this and other matters and would raise the question. Cllr Thorn agreed with the suggestion in principle; it had been tested in some rural authorities and been proven to reduce congestion at peak times as well as the length of time for roadworks. **Cllr Davies** may be able to provide some figures. There were about 18 councils in the process of applying so it may take some time but the Wiltshire Councillors would continue to push for it. Officers currently had limited powers and when roads were as congested as they are these days there is no silver bullet but it was hoped lane rental might help.

Councillor Cleasby was liaising closely with officers about local conditions on traffic flow which had helped improve traffic light phasing in recent works; she hoped they would continue to involve the Wiltshire Councillors at early stages so this could continue.

Councillor Davies left the meeting

156/25

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillors Farrell, Beaumont and Morgan**.

157/25

DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations.

158/25

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The vacancy for an East Ward Town Councillor had been advertised earlier in the day. Applications close on 31 October, and the co-option would take place at an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 10 or 12 November.

She reminded Members about the (*Wild Marlborough*) biodiversity event on Saturday 6 September, 10:30-12:30 and would welcome any Councillors who were able to attend and asked them to encourage others to go along.

The Mayor gave way to **Councillor Luson, Deputy Mayor**. He apologised in advance for a prolonged absence from late September to late March 2026 when he would be absent because of work purposes. He would write to all Councillors, hoped that on his return they would allow him to continue to serve, and looked forward to seeing the town's progress from afar. The **Town Clerk** would add an agenda item to the November meeting for Councillors to consider granting an extended period of absence.

159/25 MINUTES

RESOLVED: the minutes of the meetings held 23 June and 7 July 2025 were approved as true records and signed by the Town Mayor

Councillor Wrench questioned whether the minutes of the meeting on 23 June accurately reflected her update on Marlborough Music Month, believing an action was missing about inviting organisers to an informal meeting. The Town Clerk agreed to meet Councillor Wrench to help clarify how this might be progressed.

160/25 ACTION LOG

Members considered the action log.

#276: housing crisis and empty properties – **Councillors Cleasby** and **Farrell** were in regular discussion on this topic to gather data. Kennet and Avon Medical Practice had agreed to provide anonymous statistics of cases that related to overcrowded or unsuitable living conditions. However, both Councillors were facing time pressures, and **Councillor Cleasby** asked whether anyone could spare some time to help them collate data and move forward: **Councillor Awbery** agreed to get involved.

161/25 SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN

Members considered the draft Service Delivery Plan for the council term 2025-29.

Councillor Shantry thanked the Town Clerk and all involved in producing a very comprehensive document, and the **Town Mayor** thanked all those Councillors who had attended the workshops to provide their input.

**162/25 RESOLVED: that the Service Delivery Plan is adopted with no amendments
CIVIC WORKING PARTY**

Members considered reinstating the Civic Working Party and its membership, and whether to reinstate the Ale Tasting event.

It was agreed that membership of the Working Party would comprise Town Mayor Councillor Trow, Deputy Mayor Councillor Luson (with Councillor Cleasby standing in for the Deputy Mayor during his absence) and Councillors Fogg, Farrell and Hall together with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Civic, Cemetery & Engagement Officer.

Councillor Fogg was very supportive of the ale tasting event because as well as the traditional alternative title of the Town Crier as Official Ale Taster it was an opportunity for Councillors to meet residents in an informal setting.

RESOLVED: that the Civic Working Party is restated for 2025-26 with membership as agreed, and the annual Ale Tasting event will be reinstated

163/25 WILTSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS
Members noted an article by Ian Nockolds, the County Adviser, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils entitled “Disagreeing Agreeably: A Guide to Respectful Challenge in Local Councils”.

164/25 OUTSIDE BODIES
Councillor Cooper reported on continued liaison with the three separate Allotment Committees, with a focus on Stonebridge Lane allotments which were now looking really good after the floods in 2024. Another meeting was arranged for 23 September to discuss plans. He felt this was a good example of the Town Council and local community working together.

165/25 COMMITTEE MINUTES
In accordance with para 3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation, Members noted the approved minutes of the following committee meetings: **Planning** – 9 June, 14 July and 4 August 2025, and **Property** – 7 April 2025

166/25 COMMON SEAL
Proposed by **Councillor Fogg** and seconded by **Councillor Hall** and **RESOLVED:** that the Common Seal of Marlborough Town Council be affixed to all documents necessary to give effect to the decisions of the meeting

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm

Signed:
Town Mayor

Date: