STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council
held Monday 20th July 2026 at the Town Hall

Present:

Councillors: Keren Capeling (Vice Chair of Council), Keith Creighton, Debbie Curtis, Marcus Dixon, Stephen Hunter, Carol Kambites, Simon MacGregor, John Parker (Chair of Council), Val Randell, Keith Terry and Theresa Watt

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth – Town Clerk and County Councillor Dean Botterill

Attendees were reminded that the Proceedings of the meeting could be filmed photographed or recorded.

The Chair opened the meeting by stating that the scheduled presentation had been postponed.

The Chair also stated that, in line with the council's Standing Orders, the public may only ask questions about matters included within the meeting's agenda

TC3636 **To receive apologies**
Apologies were received from Cllr Carol Trim for the first part of the meeting and Cllr David Drew

The Chair was reminded of the need to move to Public Question time

County Councillor Dean Botterill made a statement in relation to agenda item TC3649 and the town council's consideration of purchasing an air conditioning unit for use within the town hall. He commented that the unit would cost at least £1,500 plus running costs. He felt it was hypocritical of the council to purchase such a unit with its known carbon emissions when having claimed a climate change crisis in 2019.
The Chair noted the statement and thanked County Cllr Dean Botterill.

As there were no further statements or questions, the Chair moved to agenda item TC3637

TC3637 **To receive declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest noted at this point in the meeting

TC3638 **To approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 15th June 2026**

Cllr Carol Kambites asked that a statement made under agenda item TC3626 be removed as it was inaccurate – the statement being – '***it was considered that if there was to be a single authority for the county, this would be the most expensive option'***.
In addition, Cllr John Callinan stated that the following statement was also inaccurate and not in line with the 'Structure Changes Order' - ***'the planned reorganisation will result in local elections being brought forward to May 2027' –*** he asked for the word ***'will' to be replaced by 'may'***
Council **APPROVED** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to the 2 agreed amendments

TC3639 **To note matters arising**
Officer's comments were **NOTED**

TC3640 **To receive reports from Chair of Town Council and town councillors**
The Chair informed councillors that Stonehouse had hosted a tree management workshop at the community centre recently, at which Town and Parish councils from around the Stroud District had come to learn about how we undertake tree management. He will also be attending the forthcoming Regatta at the Ship Inn Community Site.
Cllr Marcus Dixon stated how successful the canal Festival was and that the event had earned £950
Cllr Carol Kambites attended a Tenant Feedback meeting
Cllr Simon MacGregor was reinstating a regular litter picking event in the community and would be holding the next event on Saturday 5th September.
Cllr Theresa Watt will be attending another Stroud Valley Trail stakeholder meeting on 7th November at Ebley Mill
Along with the Clerk and Project Officer, Cllr John Callinan attended an information evening at Rodborough parish council to look into the energy efficiency gains following the refurbishment of the village hall.
Cllr Debbie Curtis highlighting the 'In Bloom' judging to take place this week and next and the support for the Sculpture trail; she also met with the Chair of Cainscross Town Council to help inform her of the steps she could take to mirror the 'In Bloom' successes at Stonehouse.
Cllr Carol Kambites mentioned that she was encouraged to support an item on the GALC (Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils) agenda for their Annual General Meeting (AGM)to delay the forthcoming Town and Parish Council Elections.
Cllr Keren Capeling highlighted the forthcoming summer fayre at Stonehouse Community Centre on the 25th July.

TC3641 **To receive reports from County and District Councillors**
County Councillor Dean Botterill, had provided a written report ahead of the meeting.
Cllr Simon MacGregor raised the following questions:
"I'm sure that, as our County Councillor, you're already aware of and have read the recent Ofsted report placing Park Junior School into special measures. The report highlights serious concerns about

educational standards, teaching, the curriculum, support for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), attendance and Leadership and governance.
As GCC is the local authority responsible for this maintained federation, could you update the town council on what action GCC is taking to support the school and secure the improvements identified by Ofsted? What formal intervention powers, if any, is GCC now exercising? How will GCC monitor progress?
Finally, what reassurance can you give to parents, pupils and the wider community that GCC has a clear plan in place to ensure the school moves out of special measures as quickly as possible?
Every Child in Stonehouse deserves the highest standard of education, and I believe residents deserve to know exactly what action GCC is taking to achieve that".

County Councillor Dean Botterill initially responded by stating that he did not know whether the school was the responsibility of the county council. It was confirmed that the school was a Federation and fell within Glos County Council's responsibility.

Cllr John Callinan asked Dean Botterill, why, having been elected as a county councillor he was not pushing Gloucestershire County Council to reach his own aims for the community. Cllr Callinan had further questions but said that he would put them in writing.

The Chair thanked County Councill Dean Botterill

The Chair welcomed the written update from Ward Cllr Carol Kambites
Cllr Marcus Dixon asked Cllr Kambites whether Stroud District Council's (SDC) recent mention of the 'transfer of land for a nominal sum' referring to the Ship Inn community space, meant that SDC were intending to sell the site to the town council. Cllr Kambites thought this would have been just a turn of phrase. The Clerk stated that he had been contacted by the Asset Management team at Stroud District Council who was now considering the Heads of Terms for the long-term lease for the site.
Cllr Dixon asked for all information regarding the lease to be forwarded to all Town Councillors as soon as possible.
Cllr John Callinan mentioned 'SALA' and that the Strategic Director of Place at Stroud District Council was to oversee the review of SALA to allow Town and Parish Councils to look at land that would/could be made available during the Local Government Reorganisation.

TC3642 **To receive RFO's budget report and bank reconciliation for June '26**
Council **NOTED** the council's bank reconciliation for June 2026 with a closing balance of £21,755.46.
Council also **NOTED** the latest budget report that showed 'Actual Net' income totalling £218,053.39; 'Actual Net Expenditure totalling £156,153.42 and reserve movements totalling £973.30

The Chair questioned whether any councillors had a declared interest in the payment lists provided for approval in the following agenda item. Cllrs Keith Terry and Keren Capeling declared their interest in a payment to the Stonehouse community centre on the BACS payment list and promptly left the meeting at 7.30pm

TC3643 To approve the latest payment lists:

- **BACS payments**
  Council **APPROVED** the BACS payment list totalling £40,605.68

Cllrs Keith Terry and Keren Capeling returned to the meeting at 7.31pm

- **Debit Card payments (Retrospective approval)**
  Council **RETROSPECTIVELY APPROVED** the Debit card payments totalling £67.58

And to Note the Standing order and Direct debit payments made since the previous full town council meeting
Council **NOTED** Standing order payments totalling £11,109.79 and £4,249.62 respectively.

TC3644 To approve the 'write-off' of a £0.20 overpayment to Gloucestershire county council
Council acknowledged the reason for Officer's advice and **APPROVED** the write off of £0.20

TC2645 To resolve to allow the Clerk to process payments during August 2026 without the prior submission of payment lists to and approval by Business Committee or Full Town Council and, to report back to council all payments made during the period for retrospective approval
Questions were raised as to whether the town council normally takes this position for the month of August and also whether the council should consider making normal payments only. The responses were that yes it was usual to ensure suppliers received their payments on time and that applying the criteria of 'Normal payments' would be difficult.
The Clerk highlighted the fact that apart from not have prior approval by council or Business Committee, all other parts of the payment process would be in place including the requirement for payments to be authorised by two of the council's signatories.
Council **APPROVED** the recommendation for payments to continue to be made by officers without prior approval from committee or council and that all payments made during this period would be presented to council in September for retrospective approval

TC3646 To receive the draft Minutes of Business Committee meeting 6th July 2026 and approve the following recommendations:

B/1052 - That the following minor changes be approved:

- **To Delete the earmarked reserve for 'Elections'**
- **To Delete the earmarked reserve 'Oldends Lane Sewage Development'**
- **To Delete the earmarked reserve for the 'Neighbourhood Plan Review'**
- **To consolidate the amounts currently held in the following earmarked reserves in a new earmarked reserve called 'Market Town Initiative Fund' and to Delete those reserve headings that will no longer hold reserve funding:**
    - **Stroud DC Tourism Grants - £651**
    - **Stroud District Council Market Towns Initiative Funding - £43,325**
    - **Tourism Market Towns - £1,010**

In considering the recommendation, it was suggested that there were two further earmarked reserves that should be removed from the council reserve list and for the funding held within them to be transferred to the General fund – they included the 'Canal Spring Festival' currently holding £2,000 and 'In Bloom Planting Display' currently holding £1,978.48.

Cllr Keren Capeling proposed and Keith Terry seconded the amendment – all were in favour of the amendment

Cllr Keith Terry proposed the substantive motion; this was seconded by Cllr Carol Kambites – all voted in favour

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation made by Business Committee as detailed above and to add the removal of earmarked reserves 'Canal Spring Festival' and 'In Bloom Planting Display' from the council's earmarked reserves and to transfer the funding currently held by them to the general fund

B/1053 – to approve the Council's updated 'Financial Risk Assessment'

Amendments to the Financial Risk Assessment (FRA) had been made following Business Committee's recommendations to Risk numbers 1 (Insurance) and 11 (Management of Trees). It was noted that whilst the initial part of risk 1 was amended partially, the overall score had not – this needed further amendment. It was also noted that as the council had already secured a long term contract for securing insurance cover for its assets and operations, the contract was in its last year and that previous discussions with insurance companies were not interested in providing insurance cover for local authorities and for particular issues.

It was also mentioned that the council existing level of cover did not currently include cover for play areas (*Officers requested the Council's insurers to include £100,000 of cover)*; this was a particular requirement of council when it made its decision in May '26.

The scoring for risk Item 11 had been changed although the risk score was difficult to see.

Cllr Theresa Watt proposed that subject to the risk score for risk 1 on the FRA being corrected to 3, the Financial Risk Assessment be approved: this was seconded by John Callinan – All voted in favour

Council **APPROVED** the council's Financial Risk Assessment subject to amendment to the risk score for 'Insurance' to a 3.

B/1058 – for the council's Communications working group to report to the town council's Environment Committee in future

Council **RESOLVED** that the council's Communications' working group is to be report to Environment Committee in future

B/1059 - to adopt the latest version of the 'Parish and Town Charter'

Cllr Keren Capener proposed the adoption of the Parish and Town Charter; this was seconded by Carol Kambites – all voted in favour

Council **APPROVED** the latest 'Parish and Town Charter'

TC3647 To receive the draft Minutes of Environment Committee meeting of 13th July 2026 and approve the following recommendations:

- **E/1078 – an extension to the town council's grounds maintenance contract to the 31st March 2028 with 'T W Hawkins'**

There was some confusion over the length of the original contract and when Council had made their decision. The council's Transparency code document stated a three year contract but it was explained that this was an error as the contract term was for a two year plus two year extension (making the contract length a total of 4 years should the extension be agreed). It was also mentioned that a number of older contracts were still listed.
It was stated that it would have been helpful to have met the target date for contract review so that the council could consider other options ie an in-house option. It was asked how this situation could be prevented in future – the Clerk had prepared a five year forward plan to identify key dates.
Cllr John Callinan asked for details for when the council made its decision. The Clerk to forward this detail.
Cllr Theresa Watt proposed to retrospectively approve the grounds maintenance contract with the incumbent contractor for a period of two years upto 31st March 2028. This was seconded by Debbie Curtis – 12 Councillors voted in favour – Cllr Simon MacGregor voted against the proposal.
Council **RETROSPECTIVELY APPROVED** the extension of the Grounds Maintenance contract with the incumbent contractor up to 31st March 2028

TC3648 **To debate and consider, under clause 9b of the council's Standing Orders, the following motions raised by Town Councillor John Callinan:**

1. **That questions from members of the public should be submitted at least 3 days prior to the meeting date; the three days shall not include the weekend, Bank holidays or the day of the meeting.**

Cllr John Callinan was invited to talk to this motion. Cllr Callinan's opening remarks were in favour of improving public involvement and stated that the Chair's handling of public question time at meetings was fully supported. He felt there were inconsistencies with regards to how council conducted its business when it came to answering queries raised by Councillors and those raised by members of the public – an example of this related to a similar query raised by both, but only the public query was responded to.

He mentioned that there was no provision for answering public queries at meetings that did not relate to agenda items. Clause 9b of Standing Orders allowed councillors to raise motions but not the public and clause 3e was currently focused purely on allowing the public to speak on agenda items.

In response to Cllr Callinan's opening remarks, Cllr John Parker acknowledged that he had previously been flexible in his approach to clause 3(e) because he felt it was important to allow residents to contribute, even if the matter being raised was not in relation to an item on the agenda

<u>Cllr Carol Trim entering the meeting 8.05pm</u>

Cllr Debbie Curtis suggested an amendment to the motion on the agenda to read as follows and be included at the end of clause 3e of the council's Standing Orders:

That questions from members of the public, *<u>which are unrelated to items on the council's agenda</u>*, should be submitted *<u>in writing</u>* at least 3 days prior to the meeting date; the three days shall not include the weekend, Bank holidays or the day of the meeting.

The Chair had concerns that both the original motion and any such amendment, without understanding how it would work in practice, might result in back-office problems and as such he advised that the matter should be put to Policy working group to consider in depth.

There was also a concern raised by another Cllr that the proposed motion would stifle public involvement. A further Cllr stated that she didn't understand the original motion – this led to three other Cllrs confirming the same. Cllr Carol Kambites suggested that council revert to a previous version of clause 3(e) allowing questions on any topic but

Cllr Callinan was more than happy with the current version and certainly did not wish to waste time in the matter being pushed to Policy working group.

Cllr Debbie Curtis proposed that her suggested amendment to the original motion be put forward for a vote; Cllr Simon MacGregor seconded the amendment; 12 Cllrs voted in favour – Cllr Marcus Dixon voted against.

A vote was called for on the substantive motion (Original motion as amended) by Cllr Keren Capeling and seconded by Cllr Simon MacGregor. 12 Councillors voted in favour.

Cllrs Marcus Dixon and Carol Kambites voted against.

Cllr John Parker abstained

Council **APPROVED** the (amended motion) substantive motion to be included at the end of Clause 3(e) of the council's current Standing Orders, with the following:

'Questions from members of the public, which are unrelated to items on the council's agenda, should be submitted in writing at least 3 days prior to the meeting date; the three days shall not include the weekend, Bank holidays or the day of the meeting.'

2. **A video/sound record shall be kept of each of the three main meetings of the Council i.e. Full Town Council. Environment and Business Committee.**

Cllr John Callinan introduced his second motion explaining that a recording of scheduled meetings should be approved as it could only be of help to review decisions if this were to be necessary.

Cllr Simon MacGregor felt that the recordings could be placed on the council's website for the public to view. Cllr Marcus Dixon commented that the council would have to invest in high tech equipment to do so properly.

Cllr Callinan suggested the following way forward '***to agree the motion in principle and for officers to gather relevant details of the equipment needed including costings to be submitted to full town council for approval at a later meeting***.'

Cllr Keren Capeling proposed the motion be put to a vote on the basis of Cllr John Callinan's suggested way forward; this was seconded by Cllr Simon MacGregor; all voted in favour.

Council **APPROVED** the original motion in principle on the basis that officers would gather relevant details of the equipment needed including costings, to be submitted to full town council for approval at a later meeting.

TC3649 To approve the purchase of mobile air conditioning units for the town hall

The clerk presented the agenda item explaining that it was incumbent on the council as employers to provide for the welfare of staff and ensure suitable working conditions during the prolonged periods of hot and humid weather. He commented further by stating that the town council had always looked after and supported staff and that he hoped they would continue to do so.

Cllr Theresa Watt thought that a portable unit would require a hose to be exhaust the warm air through a window opening and that this might to some degree by counter-productive. Cllr Marcus Dixon considered an air conditioning unit as being unnecessary stating the high level of energy use and the fact that local high street business, with two exceptions do not have air conditioning units and manage.

Cllr Carol Kambites was strongly in favour citing a duty to support staff during difficult times and this could be a precursor to providing a cool space for the public in the future; this was supported by Cllr Theresa Watt. There was a suggestion that portable units would be 30 to 50% less energy efficient that fixed units but acknowledged the need to support staff. Cllr Stephen Hunter made reference to the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Comments were made by Cllr Marcus Dixon that he had pointed out the reasons for not supporting this motion, by email to full Council, on the lead up to the meeting. Cllr Dixon also highlighted that the grounds staff had a less sedentary job remit than the office staff but no respite was being offered to them. It was explained that they have been given significant latitude in terms of what they do each day depending on the prevailing weather conditions and that in fact they can seek respite at both the workshop and Pavilion buildings. In addition they could also seek refuge at the council offices if necessary. Ground staff are very happy with the flexibility they have to determine their own scheduled work on a day by day basis.

Discussion ensued with regards to whether the council purchases or hires equipment.

Cllr John Parker Proposed an amendments to the original motion **'to secure a mobile air conditioning unit up to a cost of up to £1,000 for the town hall'**

The amended motion was seconded by Cllr Keren Capeling; 12 councillors voted in favour

Cllr Marcus Dixon voted against

Council **RESOLVED** to secure a mobile air conditioning unit up to a cost of £1,000 for the Town Hall.

TC3650 Date of next meeting – Monday 21st September 2026

Council **NOTED** the date of the next meeting