

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday 21st April 2026 at 7pm
in the Guild Hall, Shaftesbury Town Hall

Members Summoned and Present: Councillors Edwyn-Jones (Chair), Williams (Vice-Chair), Barratt, Budd, Elmendorff, Heritage, Hollingshead, Loader, Salkeld, Smith and Yeo (arrived at 7.01pm)

Absent: Cllrs Brown, Daultrey, Dibben and Philpott

Officers Present: Billy Maddock (Interim Town Clerk) and Sarah Johnson (Office Administrator)

In attendance: Press (1) online (0) Fran Hill (Chair, Arts & Culture Advisory Committee), Stuart Edwards (Chair, Shaftesbury Swimming Advisory Committee), Richard Thomas (Chair, Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee) and members of the public (20)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Mayor Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones welcomed everyone and introduced each councillor.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted for Cllrs Brown, Daultrey, Dibben and Philpott.

Proposed by Cllr Barratt and Seconded by Cllr Hollingshead

In Favour 11 Cllrs Edwyn-Jones, Williams, Barratt, Budd, Elmendorff, Heritage,
Hollingshead, Loader, Salkeld, Smith and Yeo

Abstentions 0

Against 0

MOTION CARRIED

3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 29th April 2025

The minutes of the meeting on 29th April 2025 were approved.

Proposed by Cllr Yeo and Seconded by Cllr Elmendorff

In Favour 8 Cllrs Edwyn-Jones, Williams, Barratt, Elmendorff, Hollingshead, Loader, Smith
and Yeo

Abstentions 3 Cllrs Budd, Heritage and Salkeld

Against 0

MOTION CARRIED

4. Chairman of Council's Presentation

Cllr Edwyn-Jones talked about events and highlights during her mayoral year 2025/26, not just for herself as Mayor but also for the council as a whole, which is detailed in the [Annual Town Assembly 2026 presentation](#).

Representatives for her charity for the year, the Shaftesbury Youth Club were presented with a cheque for monies raised so far.

Cllr Williams spoke about his time as Deputy Mayor.

He thanked Cllr Edwyn-Jones, on behalf of all of the councillors, for the effort and amount of time she has put into Shaftesbury Town Council over the past year.

At this point, Cllr Edwyn-Jones invited Chairs of advisory committees in attendance to speak about their groups.

Shaftesbury Swimming Advisory Committee (SSAC)

The Chair read out the committee's [Mission Statement](#) and reiterated that SSAC brings together the Friends of Shaftesbury Swimming (FOSS), councillors and staff, in particular the Lido Manager. He felt that tangible progress has been made since the statement was put together and stated that more than £66,000 has been raised from a variety of sources including their crowdfunders but also with support from individuals and businesses. He further stated that the total number of swims last year was up by 5% and income had increased resulting in a reduced deficit on operational costs. He felt that the Lido now being an all-year-round facility has helped with finances and in drawing people into the town.

He highlighted two particular areas of achievement; the variety of successful events which included SLICE and the lifeguard scholarships.

Looking forward, SSAC would like to look at getting funding for a feasibility study to extend and improve the Lido including to make it more environmentally friendly and they are heading in the right direction to go bigger and better in the future.

Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee (SuSAC)

The Chair spoke about progress since 2024 when the committee was created in order to meet climate change and nature loss challenges everyone is facing.

He asked members of the public in attendance how many people had heard of SuSAC, how many were aware of climate change and nature loss and think it is a problem that should be addressed, and how many think they can do something about it.

He spoke about SuSAC's 16 members who live in and around Shaftesbury and their backgrounds but stressed that the public's involvement is crucial. There are also 12 working groups that are part of SuSAC.

Looking forward, the committee's main purpose is to further progress their [Vision Statement and Master Plan 2023-31](#) and he highlighted their 3 current major projects being Orchard Town, Nature Friendly Town and the Shaftesbury Green Wheel initiative.

Mampitts Advisory Committee (MAC)

Cllr Williams, the Chair of the committee, explained where we are with the project which is on track to meet the Section 106 conditions which have to be complied with in June of this year. Building Control have granted approval and signed off the design with no conditions and he felt this was testament to the work of the consultants and all parties who have been involved with the project thus far. Construction tenders have been received and are ready for analysis and Shaftesbury Town Council are now looking to recruit a Construction Project Manager in a consultancy role.

The target from Dorset Council is to commence construction by July 2026 but the exact start date is to be agreed with the chosen contractor.

By 2nd June the panel will have evaluated tenders.

Arts & Culture Advisory Committee (A&C)

The Chair spoke about Shaftesbury being a town of stories but, until now, there has not been an opportunity to tell them.

She spoke about the proposed water feature at Enmore Green and the support in principle from Shaftesbury Town Council to explore its viability.

She also identified the challenge to find Shaftesbury pointing out that the A303 gives no indication from either direction and people pass by. However, Shaftesbury Town Council have funding in place for signage improvements, and the installation of brown tourist signage is therefore being explored.

Together with Shaftesbury Arts Collective and Shaftesbury Arts Centre, the committee are also supporting a bid for 'UK Town of Culture 2028'. This will highlight the creativity, heritage and energy of Shaftesbury and create something with lasting impact to position culture at the heart of the town's future.

Cllr Edwyn-Jones briefly spoke about the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan Committee and noted that the plan is currently under review.

She thanked Shaftesbury Town Council staff for the great work they do as a team particularly the Interim Town Clerk. She also again thanked Cllr Williams for his support.

5. To receive questions from members of the public

- Shaftesbury Car Link volunteers retiring at the end of July and are concerned this will leave hundreds of people in and around Shaftesbury without transport to get to medical appointments. Could STC apply for lottery funding to get a member of staff to replace them? Cllr Heritage stated that he would carry out research to see if there are funding possibilities. Cllr Edwyn-Jones was aware that Gillingham funded a transport bus from s106 monies, but STC does not have this funding available.
The chair of Friends of Westminster Memorial Hospital suggested a hub at the hospital could possibly be utilised for a co-ordinator for this.
Shaftesbury School student suggested, as some elderly people do not have access to mobiles or computers, maybe students could teach groups how to use technology and assist.
- Understands Dorset Council have approved the anaerobic digester at Sherborne Causeway. Feels it is in the wrong place and concerned about increased lorry traffic, servicing of the plant and access from A30. In his opinion wrong decision. Can anything be done?
Cllr Edwyn-Jones confirmed that STC had opposed it due to its inappropriate location and felt proper impact assessments had not been done. Formal action would need to be taken to change the approval, but she understands a liaison committee will be formed made up of DC councillors, local councillors, residents and representatives of the anaerobic digester company. She has asked for further details as there are many issues that have not been addressed. Motcombe Parish Council and Gillingham Town Council also opposed it.
- Chair of Shaftesbury Town Twinning - Lindlar people are coming to Shaftesbury on 30th April and asked residents to make them welcome.
- On Monday next week (27th April) Shaftesbury Arts Centre are holding their AGM and at the same time Planet Shaftesbury are showing a film. Concerned clashes happen time and again and could an electronic diary for the town be considered?
Chair of Arts & Culture Advisory Committee stated that the Arts Collective has an electronic diary for logging festival dates, etc and will share this with relevant parties.
Cllr Yeo suggested a link to the diary on the STC website.

- £400,000 shortfall on Mampitts Hub project. If shortfall not covered by 2nd June will the project proceed?
Cllr Williams confirmed pursuing grant funding and amount of shortfall depends on tenders received. May use s106 monies, public works loan or other options if not filled the gap with grant funding. If shortfall still remains on 2nd June, a decision will have to be made about the future of the project.
- Resident thought Shaftesbury is a safety conscious area but concerned that a grounds team operative on a ride-on mower is not using the roll-bar.
Cllr Edwyn-Jones thanked him for bringing this to the Council's attention and confirmed that the Interim Town Clerk will address this.
Post Meeting Note: The grounds contractor has been made aware. They do use the roll-bar, however in certain areas this is not possible due to trees.
- Resident of Victoria Mews spoke regarding a number of footballs coming over boundary walls and hitting vehicles. STC previously extended the fence upwards but balls are still coming over. Also noticed wall very low and no protection to stop balls coming over from the hardstanding sports facility (backing on to old stable lockups) and damaging vehicles. Young people are frequently asking for their balls to be returned.
Cllr Edwyn-Jones stated that STC have not received complaints from other residents but will look into it.
- Is Enmore Green bypass ever going to happen?
Cllr Edwyn-Jones pointed out that the Local Plan is proposing the whole area should be employment land, but STC have stated that they would rather see employment in other parts of the town and want the link road to be retained.
- Resident thanked Keri Jones for running the local radio station and keeping people informed and up to date on what is happening in Shaftesbury.

6. To facilitate an informal discussion between community groups to exchange ideas and aspirations for Shaftesbury

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending the Town Assembly.

Cllr Elmendorff left the meeting at 8.48pm.

The Mayor spoke about her suggestion of an 'umbrella' for managing the town's assets and her reason for inviting representatives from local organisations to exchange information and discuss their aspirations so that priorities can be understood and to establish if there is an opportunity for collaboration.

Those that spoke and were in attendance represented

- Open House
- Chamber of Commerce
- Shaftesbury Youth Club
- Rotary Club
- Friends of Westminster Memorial Hospital
- Shaftesbury Homegrown
- Shaftesbury Refugee Group/City of Sanctuary
- Shaftesbury Community Choir
- Town Twinning Association

- Shaftesbury Abbey
- Gold Hill Museum
- Talking Newspaper

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.19pm.

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