

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON FRIDAY 25 APRIL 2025 AT THE WOODMEAD HALLS

1. **Introductions and welcome from the mayor – Cllr P. Evans**

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans welcomed those attending. He said apologies had been given by Dorset Police but a statement had been sent to be read out. Apologies had also been given by Cllrs D. Holland, C. Reynolds and S. Larcombe.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans reflected on the past year and talked about the council's challenges, last year's achievements, the council's plans from April 2025 to March 2026, and the council's finances.

2. **To receive the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 19 April 2024**

Cllr B. Bawden, the Dorset Council ward member, asked for a correction to her report within the minutes, to amend 'local transport plan' to 'community transport plan'.

Proposed by K. Gollop and seconded by N. Ball, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 19 April 2024 were **APPROVED**, with the above amendment, by the majority as a correct record of the meeting.

3. **To receive the Corporate Plan 2025-30**

The Corporate Plan 2025-30 was received.

N. Ball asked for an update on how successful the drainage works were at Woodmead car park.

The deputy town clerk said the council had approved a budget of £130k for the work but it had cost just over £100k, although the project took six weeks to complete instead of four. The specification had changed during the works, increasing the size of the main drains through the car park. This didn't increase the cost much but it introduced an element of attenuation in the drains so they would be more than capable of dealing with heavy rainfall and would discharge more gradually into the rest of the system. This would also reduce likelihood of storm overflows on the seafront. He said the works should have solved the problems of flooding residential properties.

4. **Feedback from local organisations in receipt of grants and support from Lyme Regis Town Council**

S. Causley – Lyme Regis Pantomime Society

As producer and director of the pantomime, S. Causley said they staged a show at the Woodmead Halls in February. She had been directing for 10 years and every year the society had received a grant from the council, which helped them put on a high standard show. She said sound and lighting cost

them £5,500 this year and the overall cost of the show was £13,000 each year, which they helped to pay for through fundraising and the community bingo, as well as relying heavily on grants and donations. They purchased things they could use year after year so they could make it as professional an amateur show as possible. The council's recent grant had helped to pay for a geyser, which sent a shock of water vapour instead of dry ice, and a low fogger to create atmosphere. She said they were very expensive items and they wouldn't have been able to buy them without the grant from the council. They were a good investment as the equipment could be used every year and they could make some money by hiring them out to other local theatre companies. She thanked everyone involved in allocating the funds to the society.

A Vian – Lyme Regis Visitor Hub

A. Vian thanked the council for supporting the Visitor Hub. Last year, over 5,000 people had gone into the hub and they had increased their volunteer numbers to 22. They had installed a leaflet rack and had a 24-hour display of local events. They were trying to install broadband as there were other digital things they wanted to do. Exhibitions had taken place at the hub, including one by Woodroffe students of the sculpture trail maquettes, and it had been made available to other organisations.

A. Vian – Lyme Regis Baptist Church

A. Vian thanked the council for a grant towards the restoration of the church, which was yet to be completed and had taken longer than expected. As it was a listed building, there were complex issues involved. The work had included the restoration of 10 windows with zinc, each costing £10,000. He said the church was used by 17 community groups and once the restoration was complete it would be more available. The church also had links to the Waffle House.

A. Vian – Lyme Regis Regatta and Carnival

A. Vian said Regatta and Carnival was the biggest event in Lyme Regis, also attracting 10,000 people for fireworks, and traders said it was the busiest day of the year. He said they were delighted to be in partnership with the council for the fireworks' displays, one in the summer and another in November. He said many local seaside towns put on fireworks' displays and the council paid for them. Regatta and Carnival were happy to put on the display but needed the town council's support. Each display cost £6-7,000 and without the council's help it would not be viable.

P. Morton – Lyme Morris (read out by an officer)

P. Morton thanked the council for its community grant, which would make a big difference in helping the side to keep performing. He said there was a shortage of traditional folk musicians within the local area so they had to try and recruit musicians from further afield. To attract players, they had to pay for their travel expenses and/or for their time. Both players that performed last year travelled nearly an hour each way to get here and this year the performers were travelling roughly the same distances. The grant would

enable them to continue performing with live musicians and most of all, to keep performing in and around Lyme Regis providing music, colour, tradition and support to events for the well-being and promotion of the town. He said they were very appreciative of the council's continued support over the years.

C. Matheson – Little Green Change

C. Matheson said Little Green Change was an environmental education and action non-profit social enterprise based in Lyme Regis. They worked with primary and secondary aged children across the UK, with their in-person activities occurring in communities and schools in Devon, Dorset, and South-West Somerset. She said they had been lucky enough to receive a number of grants from the council since their launch in September 2023. These had included a grant to run a successful Children's Christmas Give and Take event at Woodmead Halls in November 2024, a grant to create their community stall with interactive activities, and most recently a grant to undertake activities with The Woodroffe School. This included student work experience, content in their 2025 eco magazine, and an environmental careers' talk highlighting the great environmental organisations based in Lyme Regis including Turn Lyme Green and The River Lim Action Group. She said they were extremely proud to be based in Lyme Regis and were proud of the links they had created with other organisations in the town, including the schools and Lyme Regis Library, where they ran a seed sowing event over the Easter holiday. She thanked the council and the Environment Committee for the ongoing support of their activities. As a small, non-profit with a limited income, offering all their activities and resources for free to state-funded schools and residents through their community activities, they relied on the financial support from donations and grants like the council's to continue.

D. Flett – Lyme Regis Bowling Club (read out by an officer)

D. Flett said it was great to be asked give feedback, enabling the council to make improvements where appropriate. He said the council clearly had a comprehensive framework of grant funding in place, which enabled many community groups to potentially access funding at a number of levels based on their operation and circumstances. He said the Community Grant application process was very straightforward and easy to understand with queries answered swiftly by the council team. One suggested improvement would be to amend the application form so it can be completed online and submitted from a PC rather than to handwrite and return. He said it was also beneficial to be able to present the application to the council members in person and to see the transparent approval process at work. He said it was an impressive framework and process which benefitted the community where it was needed.

Ellis Holt – Lyme Regis Town Band (read out by an officer)

E. Holt thanked the council for providing the opportunity to apply for a grant for the 2024/25 period. The grant they received enabled them to secure one of the top brass bands in the UK to come to the area and provide expertise on brass band playing to over 40 players from four counties and 12 different brass bands.

The workshop, that the band organised annually, was becoming a sought-after event in the brass band world. It brought players from as far as Wiltshire and either introduced or reminded them of why they should visit. He said the town band was honoured to be asked to play at the town's top events and would continue to support the council in every way they could. The band was set up initially with a grant from the town council in 1981 to support the town, the council and the social and formal calendar and they were proud of that. For the last 40 years, they had continued to do this, and would continue for many more years going forwards. He said the partnership they had formed was extremely strong and by continuing to work with the council, they hoped the band would live on forever. He thanked the council for its continued support of the band and said the funding helped them to achieve so much more than playing on the seafront.

K. Vernon – Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support (read out by an officer)

K. Vernon said Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support were extremely grateful to the council for its generous donation. She said cancer diagnosis was increasing nationally and they worked hard to keep up with the growing demand on their services, while at the same time remaining as accessible as possible. 50% of their clients were from Lyme Regis and the surrounding villages. The council's funding would be available to clients in Lyme Regis through their regular coffee meetings, which were held at The Waffle, Lyme Regis. She thanked the council and said its ongoing support made such a huge difference to their clients.

G. Barr – Turn Lyme Green (read out by an officer)

G. Barr said Turn Lyme Green and Plastic Free Lyme Regis were immensely grateful for the continuing support of the town council and the grants over the years had enabled them to do many things. Not least: connect with the local community with films, talks and other events, an annual Seed Swap, regular litter picks on the beaches and other litter 'hotspots', protests highlighting the negligence of water companies to protect the natural environment, and informative displays at the local fetes. He said members of Turn Lyme Green were delighted to be co-opted onto the Environment Committee where it was hoped they could assist the council further enhance and protect the area of outstanding natural beauty. He said more recently, River Lim Action had come to the forefront with river testing and a tenacious approach to highlighting drainage faults, misconnections and damaged infrastructure. The recent award of a term grant to River Lim Action for the next five years enabled this important work to continue with renewed confidence.

J. Field – Tanner's Field Film (read out by an officer)

J. Field thanked the council for the community grant and Adrienne Mullins for her seamless help in administrating it. She said the grant was significant, enabling them to screen the fiction short film they shot in Lyme Regis with local young people. Afterwards they had a lively Q&A session with the crew and cast to discuss with the local audience the themes of the film and their experience of participating in it. They were delighted with the feedback they received from the screening and the sense of communal achievement in discovering new skills and understanding the different crafts in the film-making

process. She said it was fantastic to see the amount of engagement from the audience and the positive impact on their participants. She thanked the council for making this possible.

R. Wickremasinghe – Bridport and District Citizens Advice (read out by an officer)

R. Wickremasinghe thanked the council for its support and funding of the CAB's outreach work in Lyme Regis via a term grant over for the last five years and a further five-year grant from April 2025. The grant enabled them to provide a weekly outreach session by appointment, currently based at the town council offices on Wednesdays, 10am to 3pm and staffed by a trained volunteer adviser. He said the grant helped towards the costs of training and expenses, supervision of the outreach session, management time and equipment costs. Generalist advice was provided on a broad range of issues. He said in 2024-25, they helped 101 clients in the Lyme Regis parish area with 470 separate issues. The top issues were benefits, charitable support and foodbanks, housing and debt. Financial outcomes included income gains of £158,000, and debts written off totalling £30,500. He said thanks to the funding, they could help Lyme Regis residents build financial resilience through maximising income and providing money and debt solutions.

H. Prior – Lyme Regis Gig Club (read out by an officer)

H. Prior thanked the council for its ongoing support over the past 18 years since the club was first formed. She said recently they commissioned a new gig, Ammonite, thanks in part to contributions from the town council towards the build costs. More recently, they identified the need for a protective cover for their GRP gigs, which were stored outdoors on land provided by the town council, located behind the Boat Building Academy. Due to the location, the only feasible solution was a temporary shelter. She said they successfully applied for, and received, a grant from the council to help towards the costs of any build. As the structure was temporary and solely used by the club, to date, they had been unable to secure funding from alternative sources, making the town council's contribution particularly vital. A roof would shield the gigs and equipment from harsh weather conditions, ensuring their longevity. She said they hoped to commence work on the shelter once the lease on the land was renewed and they had secured the additional funding to cover the remaining costs.

H. Britton – Lyme Regis Society (read out by an officer)

H. Britton said the Lyme Regis Society was successful in being awarded a grant to purchase a new laptop for use at their talks, having previously borrowed an old laptop. From September 2024 they were able to offer speakers a 'state of the art' laptop to deliver their presentations. And members, residents and visitors could enjoy talks including video, sound and access to the internet. She said the society was very pleased to have benefited from the grants' allocation and thanked the council.

5. Report from Dorset Council ward member – Cllr Belinda Bawden

Cllr B. Bawden said it was difficult to underestimate the impact of a new Liberal Democrat administration on Dorset Council (DC) and a Liberal Democrat MP, as well as a new Labour government. The government had reduced funding to local authorities and by abolishing the rural services delivery grant and deferring reform of social care and children's services funding, this placed even more unfair financial burden on council taxpayers in Dorset.

Cllr B. Bawden said in Dorset, taxpayers paid 82% of DC's income, whereas the national average contribution was 56%. This was especially unfair in West Dorset and the more remote rural areas as many people were living with reducing services, cuts to bus services, and a lack of post offices and NHS dentists, while council tax police contributions, house prices, utility bills and the cost of living were all going up. She said the good news was Lyme had many excellent services for residents, visitors and the wider community and DC was not planning to cut any services. It was investing in libraries, leisure centres, and culture, sport and art

Cllr B. Bawden said DC had a genuine interest in what all elected members had to contribute, irrespective of party politics. There was a Green Party member in the DC Cabinet running children's services and all elected members had a variety of opportunities to represent residents and contribute their experiences and ideas. She was on various committees, working groups and outside bodies, including government regional bodies. She was still actively involved in two local river groups in two catchments, covering three counties and two water companies, so cross border matters added complexity and challenge.

Cllr B. Bawden said there had been various presentations locally from DC on new commercial waste regulations, there had been a Low Carbon Dorset exhibition in the Jubilee Pavilion, traffic planners had been looking at schemes in the area, and more attention given to weeds growing in verges and pavements. Although this had been improved, there was still a lot to do due to issues with the contractors carrying out the work.

Cllr B. Bawden was starting to do audits on community adult and social services alongside DC's consultation on day services. She wanted to hear from those running social support networks or events or if people felt there was a gap in provision, but to also take part in the wider consultation.

Cllr B. Bawden said housing was DC's first priority and it would be carrying out a housing needs survey, managed by the Community Land Trust, hopefully in September. This would then feed into the information for the Local Plan, which would re-open for consultation in mid-August. She said the government had increased the five-year land supply targets by 80% for Dorset, which would be a huge challenge. She added that there would be briefing sessions for town and parish councils before the Local Plan consultation.

Cllr B. Bawden said she had regular update meetings with the MP, police inspector, one of the local sergeants and the harbourmaster, she met

regularly with the bathing water partnership alliance, the Western Area Transport Action Group, and she was on the Western Local Alliance for Children's Services. She also held surgeries every month in the Community Café and Saturdays in the library and encouraged people to attend and share any concerns.

Cllr B. Bawden said there was a big funding gap for the phase 5 coastal protection works to the Cobb. DC was applying for funding and public engagement sessions were planned for late-2025. DC was aiming to start work in autumn/winter 2026.

Cllr B. Bawden gave an update on beach replenishment. The most suitable time for this to take place would be during the spring tide in May and June, outside the school holidays. However, if it didn't take place at this time, it wouldn't happen at all this year.

Cllr B. Bawden said DC was looking at the best use of the children's centre and early years' provision in Lyme Regis. She said St Michael's and Charmouth Primary Schools had applied for government funding for early years' provision in the schools, which DC was working with them on. Multigenerational use of the centre was a possibility in future.

Report from Dorset Police – PC Kirsti Frecknall, Lyme Regis neighbourhood policing officer (read out by an officer)

PC Frecknall said the main issue was last summer with a group of girls causing serious issues in Lyme Regis, especially targeting the Town Mill and brewery area. After a lot of work by various officers, all three were arrested for numerous offences and bailed with several conditions. They had all received a Youth Conditional Caution for all but one of the offences. The remaining offence of the burglary was still with the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision.

PC Frecknall reported there had been 16 residential burglaries in the last 12 months, five of which were still under investigation for matters such as forensics and ongoing enquiries. There had been five offences of drug possession in the last 12 months and she urged people to contact Dorset Police or Crimestoppers if they had any information on drug dealing in the Lyme Regis area.

PC Frecknall said there had been increased patrols where possible during the Easter holiday around the town and in the gardens. This would continue into the summer months for a 'Good, Safe Summer' and they would do all they could to patrol Lyme Regis. They were hoping to get some other Neighbourhood Teams to come to Lyme Regis to support them to engage with the public and to reduce anti-social behaviour.

PC Frecknall said the police had been made aware of anti-social driving in several of the car parks in Lyme Regis and they would be carrying out increased patrols, including the use of an unmarked police vehicle. She asked anyone who witnessed anti-social driving, and if they were able to do it safely, to obtain the vehicle registration and any video footage of their behaviour. This would help to identify offending vehicles and the police would be able to

issue a S.59 Notice, which means that if they were caught again driving in an anti-social manner, the police could seize their vehicle.

PC Frecknall said Lyme Neighbourhood Policing Team were working closely with the Dorset Community Safety Team to collate a Community Protection Warning Notice to safeguard vulnerable members of the community that were being targeted by a local female. She was appearing in court on 28 April 2025 for the theft of money from an elderly male that occurred in October 2024.

PC Frecknall urged people to keep reporting incidents to Dorset Police so they were aware of the issues and could then put resources in to targeting the area in question.

6. Open Session

(a) Questions from young people

There were none.

(b) Questions from Lyme Regis Electors

G. Ford (read out by an officer)

G. Ford expressed concerns about the choice of double decker buses for the park and ride service, as he had witnessed three incidents last week which endangered pedestrians. He said on two occasions, at the corner of Church Street and Bridge Street, he saw bus drivers waving out of their way pedestrians who were standing on the pavement. He had also seen the bus hugging the church wall so closely, making the Church Street pavement inaccessible. He was aware the same double decker buses were used for services east and west out of the town, and at times when passing each other they could cause chaos in the narrow streets, but said park and ride buses were passing through every five to 10 minutes and this frequency increased the likelihood of injury to pedestrians. He said he accepted it was likely councillors who undoubtedly had the visiting public and the town's interest at heart would not choose this size of vehicle to be operating the park and ride service and that this decision was perhaps made with what is affordable in mind. However, he was also aware the council had adopted and were working towards implementing a travel and transport policy which aimed to make Lyme a safer, cleaner, more attractive and more accessible place for residents, workers and visitors. For this reason, he asked the council to consider doing all within its power to ensure buses of a more appropriate size were used for the park and ride service in future years.

The deputy town clerk said double decker buses were actually shorter and narrower than single deck buses and had a tighter turning radius, therefore moving to single deck wouldn't necessarily help with these problems. He said because of the camber in the road and their height, the double decker buses struggled to go past each other, so they went onto the pavements. He said it was unfair to suggest double decker buses were being foisted on the council by the bus company; in reality, this capacity was needed at times. Park and ride carried 47,000 passengers in 2024, with numbers fluctuating through the day and reaching capacity at times. He added that the number of people using

the park and ride was increasing year on year, supporting the principle of keeping vehicles out of town, therefore the double decker buses and the capacity they provided was more important.

N. Ball

N. Ball asked the following questions/statements:

1. Empty shops in the town were in a poor state.
2. Additional housing was putting pressure on the sewage works. He asked what the capacity of the drains were, given the additional housing being built?
3. Weed growth and road sweeping had both improved.

K. Gollop

K. Gollop asked the following questions/statements:

1. Lyme Regis looked scruffy and the seafront wasn't being swept. He said there was a problem with bins, with the bin store at Broad Street car park closing and now 15 bins on Gun Cliff.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans said the town council was trying its best to keep on top of this and every month there was a seafront inspection carried out. The council was aware there was a problem with the state of public toilets. He said the town council had been talking to DC for some time about taking on some of its assets but this was moving slowly.

Cllr B. Bawden said both councils had provided space for commercial bins, although neither council was obliged to do this. She said the environmental health team had closed the bin store in Broad Street car park and Gun Cliff was the only space available as an alternative. She suggested the businesses needed to take more responsibility for their waste.

The deputy town clerk said the town council had agreed to take on the management of the bin store. He said many of the previous problems occurred because the store was not actively managed and businesses would need to use it responsibly in future.

The mayor, Cllr Philip Evans said the town council would continue to work with DC on these issues. Other issues included the condition of the steps at Bell Cliff, and DC had now allowed the town council to carry out repair works. The Cobb Gate railings had also been broken for nearly a year, which DC was aware of but didn't have the finances to deal with.

The deputy town clerk said a price had been obtained to repair the railings, which was around £6k, and it was hoped the town council could work collaboratively with DC to get it resolved.

2. He congratulated the town council on all the projects it had completed this year.

3. He suggested a 'car park full' sign could be placed at the top of Cobb Road.

The deputy town clerk said DC didn't support the town council putting signs out in the highway on Cobb Road because it was a narrow road and an obstruction. However, the council could look at electronic signs that were operated remotely, although the view was people would ignore it and try and find a space anyway.

It was agreed this would be brought to a future meeting of the Town Management and Highways Committee.

3. He didn't think sufficient notification was given for this meeting.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans said one of the reasons for the town council launching a magazine was to get messages out, as there wasn't a great deal of press coverage in Lyme Regis. He clarified that this was not a council meeting and councillors did not have to attend.

K. Gollop said he had not received a copy of the council newsletter in the past.

The mayor, Cllr P. Evans said there had been a problem with the distribution of the newsletter through the Royal Mail, with whole sections of the town not receiving one. He said it was hoped distribution of the magazine would be more successful.

N. Ball

N. Ball asked the following statements/questions:

1. If people saw problems with signage, they should log issues on the DC website.
2. He thanked the council for the town bus service.
3. The gardens were looking good and he thanked the council for the planting in Langmoor Gardens. He said the council must be mindful of weed growth, which needed to be done early in the spring and summer.

A. Vian

A. Vian asked if parking in Cobb Square could be reviewed, as double yellow lines allowed disabled parking, as well as the area next to the harbour railings. This left Cobb Square cluttered up with vehicles.

Cllr Bawden said DC traffic planners had looked at this area and there were plans around Cobb Square to make it safer for pedestrians, as well as plans for Broad Street. However, these plans did not have a very good reception from the town council. She said there was also the matter of enforcement; DC's parking enforcement team was in the town every day but had to cover

the whole town and were never here for more than two hours. However, the more issues were reported, the more attention would be paid.

c) Questions from others present at the meeting

There were none.

7. Lyme Regis Town Council Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The meeting noted the annual return.

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.