

NAILSWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council
Held at 6.30pm in the Town Hall, Old Bristol Road
on Tuesday 18th February 2025

Present:

Clr Peter Bodkin (Chair)
Clr Shelley Rider
Clr Steve Robinson
Clr Louis Nicholas
Clr Colleen Rothwell
Clr Julian Dennis
Clr Paul Francis
Clr Luke Stewart
Clr Ros Mulhall

Minutes:

Clerk

Apologies:

Clr Phil Sullivan
Clr Tyler White

Also present:

District Cllr Maggie Dutton

2024/185**Public Participation**

Three members of the public were present with an interest in the item concerning the consultation on the future of the Chamber of Trade.

The Chair of the Chamber of Trade (CoT) clarified several points about the organization and its market. The CoT supports Nailsworth as a retail centre, with approximately 30-40 members currently, though their website claims 250. Only a minority of members are brick-and-mortar businesses, with the majority (approximately 90%) being market traders.

The CoT has recently voted to shut down and separate the market. This decision is currently on hold pending the result of a consultation being run by Stroud District Chamber of Trade, after which the market's future could be reconsidered.

Council raised concerns about differential membership fees between retailers (£99) and market traders (£25), which may explain low retailer participation in the Chamber of Trade. There were questions about financial transparency, with accounts being presented only at private meetings.

The relationship between the CoT and Love Nailsworth (established as a COVID recovery response for tourism, residents and local economy) was discussed.

Several council members emphasized the importance of the CoT sharing their constitution, membership details, and financial structures to dispel misinterpretation and increase transparency.

All agreed the market is a valuable town asset, serving both retail and social functions. The detail of how this is achieved is for another discussion. The meeting concluded with approval of a draft consultation response regarding the future of the CoT and market (minute 2024/194).

2024/186

Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensations

There were none made.

2024/187

Consideration of Planning Applications received as follows:

CONSULTATION

- a. None received.

TREES IN A CONSERVATION AREA

- b. None received.

2024/188

To confirm minutes of the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 4th February 2025

These were noted.

All agreed

2024/189

To confirm the minutes of the Recreation & Amenities Committee on Tuesday 4th February

These were noted.

All agreed

2024/190

To consider the recommendations of the Recreation & Amenities Committee

To **approve** the installation of additional power supplies at the Clocktower by contractor 1 at a cost of £980.

All agreed

To **agree** an additional £4,000 be allocated to this Miles Marling path improvements project for additional works.

All agreed

To **agree** the legal transfer of Beechwood Close play area goes ahead, in accordance with the historic Section 106 agreement, and only when the remedial work is completed, inspected and a satisfactory ROSPA report is submitted to the Clerk.

All agreed

Regarding the final recommendation:

*To **recommend** legal fees of up to £1,000 are set aside for the legal work for Beechwood Close play area*

The Clerk has had recent correspondence from Redrow's representative to confirm they will pay the Council's legal fees for the transfer.

2024/191

Accounts

To agree payments in accordance with the budget as listed in the attached reports

Cllr Peter Bodkin and Cllr Steve Robinson agreed to authorise the payments before 12 noon on Friday 21st February 2025.

The Clerk confirmed that the railings near the Clocktower are owned by GCC and their replacement was carried out in partnership with GCC, from grant funding coming from various sources as part of the Textile Trail project.

It was **resolved** that the payments as listed are agreed.

All agreed.

2024/192

To appoint a councillor as an Internal Checker in accordance with the Financial Regulations

The last cllr to perform this duty was Cllr Colleen Rothwell. Cllr Colleen Rothwell explained the duties and how it can involve any process which is picked on by the Checker to look at.

It was **resolved** that Cllr Julian Dennis take on the duties of the Internal Checker.

All agreed.

2024/193

To approve the appointment of the independent Internal Auditor

The proposal is to appoint Ian Crowe for this audit. It was noted that it's good practice to change the auditor every few years and for this to be planned into future audits.

It was **resolved** appoint Ian Crowe as Internal Auditor for this year.

All agreed.

2024/194

To consider a response to a consultation on the future of Nailsworth Chamber of Trade

A draft response to the consultation had been circulated to Council prior to the meeting:

Consultation on the Future of Nailsworth Chamber of Trade and Monthly Market 18th February 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. Nailsworth Town Council (NTC) has carefully considered the proposals and wishes to make the following observations, including additional concerns that have been brought to our attention.

Background Context

The Town Council recognizes the historical significance of the Chamber of Trade in Nailsworth and the important role it has played in supporting local businesses and organising community events. The monthly market, in particular, has been a valuable asset, both as a community gathering point and as a means of generating funds for town improvements.

We note with interest that a similar proposal to separate the market was considered approximately seven years ago, and at that time the Chamber chose to maintain the integrated model for the benefit of the town. The recent decision to split the market from the Chamber therefore represents a significant change in direction.

Governance and Transparency Concerns

Nailsworth Town Council has significant concerns regarding the process and transparency surrounding this proposed separation:

- 1. The lack of publicly available accounts from the Chamber of Trade makes it impossible to assess the financial implications of the separation properly.*
- 2. The decision-making process for the market separation appears to present a potential conflict of interest, with a majority of voting members having direct ties to the market as stall holders or with other interests.*
- 3. The differential membership fees (£25 for market stall holders versus £99 for other businesses) creates an inequitable structure that may have unfairly influenced the vote and more broadly excludes some local traders from membership.*

Financial and Asset Considerations

NTC has concerns about how this separation might impact the economic vitality of our town:

- 1. The proposed transfer of assets (market stalls) and potentially funds from the Chamber to a profit-making market organisation with no formal obligation to reinvest in the town represents a significant loss of community resources.*
- 2. The market represents a significant income stream (approximately £5,000 per annum) that has historically been reinvested into town events and improvements. There is no guarantee this practice would continue.*
- 3. The ownership and management of market assets, particularly the stalls which have been hired out to generate additional income, requires careful consideration to protect the town's continued interest.*
- 4. The financial sustainability of both the market and a future Chamber post-separation is a significant concern, particularly given the Chamber's reliance on market income for its activities.*

Organisational Structure and Coordination

The Town Council notes that:

- 1. With the existence of Love Nailsworth alongside the Chamber, there is already some duplication of effort in promoting the town. Adding a third independent organisation (the separated market) risks further fragmentation.*
- 2. Clear communication channels and coordination mechanisms would be essential if the separation proceeds, to ensure all organisations work toward the common goal of enhancing Nailsworth's economy.*

Recommendations

Based on these considerations, Nailsworth Town Council strongly recommends:

- 1. A full independent audit of the Chamber's accounts before any separation or asset transfer takes place, to ensure transparency and proper stewardship of resources.*

2. *A review of the membership structure and voting procedures of the Chamber of Trade to ensure fair representation of all local businesses in decision making.*
3. *Full disclosure of the proposed governance structure for any new market organisation, including how decisions about profit distribution would be made.*

Response to Specific Consultation Questions

On the future of the Chamber:

Given the concerns about current governance, NTC believes a complete rebirth with renewed outlook, transparent governance structures, and equitable membership policies would be the most beneficial outcome for the town.

Establishing a new Chamber as a chapter of the District Chamber would give clear commitments to transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration with other town organisations.

On purpose:

We believe a Chamber of Trade should primarily focus on representing and supporting ALL local businesses, promoting the town to visitors, and working collaboratively with other organisations on events and improvements that enhance Nailsworth's economic vitality.

On subscriptions:

Any subscription model must be equitable and transparent. The current two-tier system appears to favour market stall holders above retailers and businesses with permanent premises in Nailsworth, creating division rather than unity.

On NTC's contribution:

Nailsworth Town Council is committed to working collaboratively with all organisations promoting the town's economy, provided they operate with transparency, accountability, and a genuine commitment to the town's collective interests. NTC look forward to participating in the upcoming event on footfall and visitor behaviour, and welcome further dialogue with all parties on these important matters.

Following discussion with members of the public present, Council agreed to submit the above response to Stroud and District Chamber of Trade as the independent body carrying out the consultation.

It was **resolved** that the consultation response on the future of Nailsworth Chamber of Trade be submitted.

All agreed.

2024/195

Reports for information (no decisions required):

Financial summary:

- a) Income and Expenditure report**
- b) Budget comparison report**

- c) Main bank account reconciliation report
- d) Premier bank account reconciliation report

These reports were noted.

2024/196

To review NTC’s Risk Management Review

It was noted.

2024/197

To receive a report from the Town Mayor

The report was noted.

There will be a ‘cllr walkabout’ this Saturday.

2024/198

To receive a report from District Councillors

The report was noted.

SDC Council Plan and budget have been adopted. There will be funding for a district play strategy, fly tipping removal and new litter bins. SDC’s Council Plan also includes more activities around nature. SDC Local Plan has not been supported due to the effects of allocated housing in the southern part of the district leading to improvements needed to the motorway junctions. The District Council has no influence over funding for motorway infrastructure.

2024/199

To receive a report from the County Councillor

The report was noted.

The County Council elections will take place as planned on 1st May.

Both GCC and SDC are meeting to discuss options for devolution; there will be a meeting in March to decide whether there will be one unitary authority, or whether the county will be split in two.

GCC are considering 20mph zones and have changed their stance on these.

2024/200

To receive an update on NTC office activities

The report was noted.

2024/201

Review [NTC Full Council Action Plan](#)

The Action Plan was noted.

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 Town Mayor
 Nailsworth Town Council
 Civic Centre, Old Market, Nailsworth, GL6 0DU

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 Date