

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Tow Law Town Council held on Tuesday 16th September 2025, commencing at 6.30pm in the Community Centre, Tow Law.

PRESENT: Councillors F. Nicol (Chair), M. Craggs, P. Eastwood, J. Fowler and P. Stokes.

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor A. Savory, G. F. Smith (Clerk).

Residents: Stephanie Edwards and Joan Coughtrey.

156/25 APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Councillors M. Dyer and A. Walsh and County Councillors J. Shuttleworth.

157/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Nicol declared an interest in agenda items No. 8 Tow Law Community Association and item No. 9 Tow Law Food Bank.

Councillor Craggs declared an interest in agendas items Nos 7 Allotments, No 8 Tow Law Community Association and item No. 9 Tow Law Food Bank.

Councillor P. Stokes declared an interest in agenda item No. 8 Tow Law Community Association.

Councillor P. Eastwood declared an interest in agenda item No. 7 Allotments.

158/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON 15th July 2025

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair.

159/25 ACTION LIST JULY 2025

The list was circulated to Councillors before the meeting, Members agreed to accept the list

160/25 COMMUNITY FUND

The Clerk read out an application from the Art Group which meet in the Community Centre. It was decided to defer a decision until the next Town Council Meeting for the Clerk to make some checks into recent payments from the Fund to the Group and the numbers attending the sessions.

Signed.....Chair

161/25 REPORT BY THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

- High Hill House – Update, appropriate plans are in place
- Former Childrens Home – Update, appropriate staff and plans are in place.

162/25 ALLOTMENTS

Allotment Inspections – Councillor Craggs and the Chair have arranged to carry out the re-inspection on Monday 22nd September 2025 and report to the next Town Council Meeting.

Pigeon Loft Agreements had been signed by the two tenants.

The Clerk reported that the legal advice had been received (verbal) that the Council should not sell the two plots on Millennium Green as they were classed as allotments on the transfer from Durham County Council and, also the Council have a waiting list of potential allotment tenancies.

Members agreed with the legal advice.

163/25 TOW LAW COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Councillor Stokes reported on events in the Community Centre some vacancies. A.G.M Thursday night (Trustees required). Manager appointed , starts Monday 22nd September 2025 (Hayley Anderson).

164/25 TOW LAW FOOD BANK

Councillor Nicol/Craggs reported that demand for the service is extremely very high. Funding is an issue (to discuss with Local Network Organiser), present funds ends September 2026.

165/25 POLICE/PACT/SPEEDWATCH – Report from Councillor Nichol

PACT MEETING

24 Anti-social behaviour reports (two months)

Next Meetings: 3rd October; 12th December; and 6th February 2026

SPEEDWATCH

63 speeding reports

166/25 COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

The Clerk reported that he had sent all Councillors a copy of the Notice of Vacancy and placed it on the Council's Notice Boards and Web site asking for applications by Monday 13th October 2025 with interviews scheduled for the next Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 21st October 2025. Three applications had been received.

Signed.....Chair

167/25 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor Savory reported on the following:-

- Car Park sign on High Street in need of replacement
- In/out signs to the Car park outside the Co-op shop (chase up).
- Local Networks – no date for commencement.
- Food Bank funding for the Christmas period.

Councillor Stokes asked the following:-

- Flower Beds on Deerness Estate (in a poor state?).
- Footpath – overgrown with grass/dandelions at the Sensory Garden
- Bench removed?

168/25 BANK ACCOUNT (on-line banking) – Signatory forms completed , amended documents approved by the Co-op Bank. Councillor Nicol and Craggs were awaiting delivery of the account tokens. Because of the change over to .gov.uk delayed it was necessary for the Clerk to input the payment details for this month only with cheques raised and signed by two Councillors for the Clerk's salary and HMRC payments.

169/25 PLANNING MATTERS

Application DM/25/02108/FPA by Miss Joan Coughtrey for demolition of 2 garages and construction of a double detached garage at the rear of 6 Campbell Street, Tow Law.

DECISION; No objections.

170/25 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Clerk reported the following:-

- payments vouchers 30 to 40 sum of £5539.18

Members agreed to pay the above accounts.

171/25 BEEHIVE COKE OVENS

The gorse plants had been treated and trimmed back on 7th August 2025.

Signed.....Chair

172/25 TOW LAW MILLENNIUM GREEN

Response from the Charity Commission:-

- Further information required (Full application required).
- Evidence of minimum income required (£5000), formal letter of funding from a recognised funding body.
- Governing document required.
- Questions on public benefit to answer.
- Review charitable purposes.
- Transfer from Tow Law Millennium Green Trust to the Town Council – removed from registration?
- Trustees - All Councillors to sign the Declaration document as Corporate Trusteeship.
- Complete new application form.

Clerk to consult with staff at Durham Community Action (Willington) to assist with the completion of the form.

Inspection of Play Equipment (still outstanding), BF Property Services to check out and report findings to the Town Council (Clerk).

173/25 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Further progress to be made as soon as possible, all Councillors to assist with searching funding streams.

174/25 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk reported on the following:-

1. Change over to .gov.uk E-mails Members agreed for the Clerk to arrange with David Rider to correct the program and issue new guidance as soon as possible.
2. Tow Law Pharmacy relocation to 126 Dan's Castle – The Clerk thanked Councillor Stokes for his input and had circulated all Councillors with the report which was sent to the DCC Partnership Support Officer on Thursday 11th September 2025. No response received.
3. Memorial Seat (Councillor Colin Hayton) – Members agreed that the seat could be located at the bend of the footpath on Millennium Green. Clerk to contact Carol Hayton.

Signed.....Chair

175/25 MEMBERS REPORTS

Councillor Nicol :-

- Selling off Social Housing in Tow Law, concerns regarding converting areas to Community Gardens.

Councillor Stokes:-

- Flags – abusive behaviour by the person responsible for erecting the flags in the Town.

176/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21st October 2025 in the Community Centre, commencing at 6.30pm

PRIVATE

177/25 Clerk's salary award from 1st April 2025

Information had been received from CDALC regarding the Local Government Pay settlement for 2025/26 (1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026) for a 3.2% pay increase.

Members agreed for the payment to be made to the Clerk.

The meeting finished at 7.30pm

Signed.....Chair