Minutes of the Thornbury ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (assembly of electors)

held at 7:30pm TUESDAY 28th APRIL 2026
in The Main Hall at The Castle School, Thornbury

In Attendance:

Cllr Helen Ball
Cllr Chris Woodhouse
Cllr Chris Bloor
Cllr Chris Davies
Cllr Chris Rowe
Cllr Christine Carter
Cllr Tiff O'Connor
Cllr Neil Johnson
Cllr David Dawkins
Cllr Kath Greenman
Cllr Fiona Deas
Cllr Gil Gilroy

Hattie Clayton and 5 members of Jigsaw
5 members of Castle School's student body
Penny Baker and 2 members of Krunch
Rob Smith and Katie Walding from the SLCC – (Society of Local Council Clerks)

Members of the public – 108

Hannah Bowden (Chief Executive Officer)
Vicky Bailey (communication and Engagement Officer)
Caroline Adams (Administrator)

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1. Welcome from the Town Mayor

Cllr Helen Ball welcomed attendees, gave a brief introduction to the speakers, and presented some of Thornbury Town Council's key achievements over the past year, along with projects planned for 2026–2027. The Mayor also outlined ways to engage with local councillors through the "Meet the Councillor" sessions, which take place on the last Saturday of each month.

2. Sign the minutes from the last Annual Town Meeting

The minutes were signed as an accurate record of the last Annual Town Meeting, falling on Tuesday 29th April 2025.

3. Introduction of Councillors present

Each councillor present introduced themselves to the members of the public present and summarised their reasons for becoming a councillor.

4. Guest Speakers

Jigsaw – Hattie Clayton and 5 members of Jigsaw.

Representatives from Jigsaw outlined their work supporting young people with sensory and anxiety needs. The Sensory Box Project was introduced, providing boxes containing sensory aids to help reduce anxiety and improve access to services, particularly in waiting environments. It was noted that the boxes are available for purchase by organisations, with proceeds supporting future youth projects, and that the project responds to feedback from young people who find busy and noisy settings challenging.

Representatives of The Castle School Thornbury Community

A group of young people from Castle School shared their views on living in Thornbury, noting that they value the High Street, local shops and lower traffic levels, which help them feel safer when meeting friends. Concerns were raised about young people feeling stereotyped and that many activities are not aimed at older teenagers. The group highlighted the need for more safe spaces and opportunities for those aged 13+, including volunteering and employment, and noted that better promotion of activities and closer links between the community and local schools would improve engagement. Adult support was identified as important in helping young people develop and progress their ideas.

Krunch – Penny Baker

Representatives from Krunch outlined their activities and impact over the past year. During this period, 561 young people attended 832 sessions. Provision is delivered across several locations in Thornbury, including Turnberries and the Skatepark Pod, with activities shaped by the interests of young people. These include accredited courses, small group and one-to-one work, volunteering opportunities, and skills development.

It was noted that Thornbury Town Council sponsors detached youth work and has allocated £120,000 towards the redevelopment of the skatepark with a further £180,000 to be raised.

Young people also shared what they value about Thornbury, including its green spaces and local facilities, and highlighted areas for improvement such as transport, lighting, and the need for affordable places to meet.

Society of Local Council Clerks – Rob Smith and Katie Walding

A presentation was given by the Society of Local Council Clerks on the role of local councils as the first and most accessible tier of local government, often referred to as “democracy within walking distance”.

The presentation highlighted opportunities for youth engagement, including Youth Councils, volunteering, employment, and standing for election. The benefits of apprenticeships were outlined, noting that they provide valuable skills and perspectives for councils while offering young people meaningful career pathways.

Research was referenced showing that early engagement encourages long-term involvement, with young people bringing valuable viewpoints. It was emphasised that when councils enable young people to be heard and involved, this benefits both the council and the wider community.

5. Matters Raised by Electors

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5.1 A resident requested an update on the development of the health centre. It was reported that delays in signing the contract were due to the number of required signatories, and that progress is expected to commence in the near future.

5.2 An update was provided on vacant units along the high street. It was reported that the Town Council is working in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and St Mary's Centre to promote Thornbury. The Council is also exploring closer engagement with existing businesses to better understand their needs and challenges.

Reference was made to the monthly *Love Thornbury* events, which aim to increase footfall in the town centre and raise Thornbury's profile with prospective businesses. It was noted that South Gloucestershire Council offers a range of support and opportunities for businesses, and that maintaining a vibrant town centre continues to be a key priority.

The changing nature of the high street was acknowledged, including the growth of online shopping and the evolving role of high streets as social and community spaces. It was noted that a representation had been received from a local resident regarding the changing function of the high street, expressing concern that a significant proportion of units have been converted to, or are now used for, residential purposes. The representation also highlighted issues arising from parking pressures and instances of illegal parking along the high street. Other factors affecting the town centre were discussed, including the closure of national retail chains due to decisions taken at a national level. It was reported that discussions are ongoing with South Gloucestershire Council and the police regarding parking enforcement.

5.3 An update was provided regarding the outcome of the Turnberries survey. It was reported that the results of the survey are expected to be received within the next one to two weeks, with further information to follow over the coming months.

The meeting was closed at 21:21

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