

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee
held on Monday 11th September 2017

DRAFT

Subject to confirmation

PRESENT

Cllr S Hitchings – Committee Chairman
Cllr R Carter – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr L Lindsay
Cllr H White

Cllr D Robinson – Committee Vice Chairman
Cllr C Stevens
Cllr H Mieville
Cllr L Hitchings

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

District Cllr Kerby

16. PUBLIC SESSION

District Cllr Kerby was in attendance to support the Blandford Youth & Community Centre and update Councillors on recent developments. Cllr White queried the transfer of the site from the Foundation Governors to the School and expressed his frustration over the difficulties experienced by District Cllr Kerby and his team when this is a valid requirement for a facility to benefit the town. Cllrs White, Carter and Mieville both congratulated District Cllr Kerby on the work he has carried out to ensure there is a youth centre provision in the town, following the cuts made by DCC.

17. APOLOGIES

Cllr P Clark – Chairman of Council

18. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were required, however Councillors declared personal interests in various matters, as detailed in the respective agenda items below.

19. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5TH JUNE 2017

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 abstention) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

It was agreed by the Committee that Agenda Item No. 9.1 is brought forward for discussion and voting due to District Cllr Kerby's attendance.

20. TO CONSIDER SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

20.1 To consider approving the Service Level Agreement with the Blandford Youth & Community Centre and to release the committed funds

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

20. **TO CONSIDER SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (cont)**

The Committee approves the draft Service Level Agreement at £15,000 a year between 1st September 2017 (TBC) and 31st March 2019. This will be on a pro rata basis for the 2017/18 financial year and will be calculated once the centre is open and the agreement is signed.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

21. **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE**

21.1 Office Cover – Cllr Lindsay kindly covered the office during five days in August due to staff leave and sickness and has been given a £50 voucher as way of thanks for her help and support.

21.2 Letter of Thanks – The Town Council has received a letter from the Fashion Museum thanking us for the grant money that they are extremely grateful for, as it makes all the difference to them. A letter has also been received from Daniel Cadisch at the Citizen's Advice for the £2,000 grant. They have said that they are a small local charity reliant on donations for the continuation of the service and they are therefore very grateful for the grant monies.

21.3 Elections – At a recent meeting of the Responsible Financial Officers of Dorset parish and town councils, it was discussed that these councils must now pay for all elections from May 2019. Councillors queried this and the Town Clerk was asked to contact NDDC to find out more information.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

21.4 Façade Works/Market – Because of the façade works on the Corn Exchange, the Shambles market traders have been trading in the Corn Exchange on Thursdays and Saturdays and sometimes on the street market. They have been charged the respective rates for whichever market (£16.50 Indoor & £18.50 on the street market), although one stallholder has opted to continue to pay his Shambles rate of £20.00 which includes electricity.

21.6 Water Rates – On 1st April 2017, non-household retail market for water and sewerage opened up to the market enabling business customers to choose their water retailer. Bristol and Wessex Water was the water authority to the Town Council. On 1st April 2017 the Town Council was automatically transferred to water2business which is a branch of Bristol Water and Wessex Water. The Town Council currently is contracted with LASER Energy which is the contracting authority, part of Kent County Council for the supply of gas and electricity. LASER offer a very competitive rate and the RFO contacted them to see if they are able to offer a competitive rate for the supply of water. LASER have advised that it is unlikely that they will be able to save the Town Council any money as they are used to dealing with Local Authorities with an annual spend in water of around £100,000.00. The Town Council's annual spend on water is £2500.00. Laser would also charge the Town Council a procurement fee of £1500.00 LASER advised that the actual increase in charging for water since the change from Bristol and Wessex to water2business is only 1%. As water2business are offering a competitive rate the Town Council will remain with them for the supply of water.

21.7 Internal Auditor's Report – Darkin-Miller carried out their first internal audit of 2017/18 on 4th September. There were no issues raised and the report will follow in December's agenda.

21.8 Pedestrian Access – Following a resident's request to assist with an alleged public right of way, the alleyway behind Morrisons that leads to Barnack Walk, being locked permanently, a letter has been sent to Tara Hansford at DCC for clarification on whether this is a registered public right of way as the resident believes it should be made available for use. The alleyway gates have been locked by Morrisons as it has received a legal challenge from a user falling over due to the condition of the surface and its inappropriate use at night by people using the nearby nightclub.

21. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (CONT)

- 21.9 Rates Recovery – Business Rates Appeal – In October 2014 Blandford Forum Town Council entered into an agreement with RatesRecovery to act on the Town Council's behalf to appeal against the Rateable Values on all the Council's properties. The RFO has been in contact with RatesRecovery checking how the appeals are going. The RFO was advised that most of the properties were correct, but the Tabernacle Toilet and the Municipal building was still outstanding. The Town Council received notification from North Dorset District Council that the Municipal building rateable value has been amended from £26,500 to £24,750 and this goes back to April 2010 and covers the period to March 2017. There was a new rateable valuation set in April 2017 of £28,250. The total amount refunded for the period for the Municipal building is £4,201.75. We have also been advised that there will be a refund on the Tabernacle Toilets of £706.08 for the same period, but we have not received as yet the paperwork to advise what the amended rateable value was set to. When we signed up to RatesRecovery the agreement was that we would be charged 30% of any savings made. The RFO will put the refund into General Reserve and when the invoice comes in from RatesRecovery for £1,472.30 + VAT the payment will come out of General Reserves.
- 21.10 Dorset Local Access Forum Recruitment – Councillors have been sent information about joining this forum. The Forum is a statutory, voluntary body that provides numerous local, regional and national organisations with independent advice with regards to improving outdoors access/green space for people to enjoy. It has also been advertised on Facebook and placed in the community notice boards.
- 21.11 Dorset Architectural Heritage Week – Terence Dear has written on behalf of the Civic Society and the Blandford Heritage exhibitors, to say that once again they are indebted to the team of caretakers – Scott, Nick and John – for their unfailing good humour and support over the past two days. Their help is always very much appreciated.
- 21.12 Blandford Stour Valley Band – The Secretary of the Band has written to the Town Clerk to thank her for arranging the space outside the Corn Exchange and the chairs provided so the band could be seated whilst playing in the Market Place, awaiting the arrival of the Carnival.

22. ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- 22.1 Administration Budget for the year to 21st August 2017
The paper was noted (see Appendix A).
- 22.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 21st August 2017
The paper was noted (see Appendix B).
- 22.3 Reserve Accounts as at 21st August 2017
The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

23. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION:

- 23.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the list of cheque payments 010427 – 010484 (sheets 748-756) totalling £155,436.71

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Robinson and AGREED unanimously that

The list of cheque payments 010427 – 010484 (sheets 748-756) totalling £155,436.71 are received and retrospectively approved.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

23. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION: (cont)

- 23.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2017 to 31st July 2017 (sheets 136-138) totalling £84,258.02

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Robinson and AGREED unanimously that

The direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2017 to 31st July 2017 (sheets 136-138) totalling £84,258.02 are received and retrospectively approved.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

- 23.3 To receive and retrospectively approve BACS payments BACS 166 to BACS 174 totalling £39,368.11

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Robinson and AGREED unanimously that

The BACS payments list BACS 16 to BACS 174 totalling £39,368.11 are received and retrospectively approved.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

- 23.4 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period to 29th August 2017

The paper was tabled (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED unanimously that

The investment account for the period to 29th August 2017 is retrospectively approved as per Appendix D.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

- 23.5 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash Checks

Cllr S Hitchings carried out a petty cash check and confirmed that the monthly bank reconciliation had been undertaken during the period and everything was found to be in order.

- 23.6 Bank Reconciliation to 31st July 2017

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

24. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS (CURRENT AVAILABLE BALANCE £8,305.00 – THIS INCLUDES THE £1805 CARRIED OVER FROM 2016/17 UNDERSPEND)

- 24.1 Forum Drama

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 against) that a **RECOMMENDATION** is made to full council that

A grant of £750 is approved to contribute towards the purchase of a lighting control desk, with payment on receipt of proof of purchase.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

24. **TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS (cont)**

24.2 **Blandford Forum Camera Club**

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 against) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

A grant of £1,000 is approved as a contribution towards the upgrade to the group's current needs (roofing/IT/audio-visual equipment).

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

25. **TO CONSIDER SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS**

25.1 **To consider an application for a Service Level Agreement with Age Concern Blandford Forum**

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

As a trustee of Age Concern, Cllr Lindsay declared an interest and did not take part in voting.

7.55pm – Cllr Lindsay left the meeting during discussion and voting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 non-vote) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

The Committee supports a grant of £1,000 and will look favourably to a further grant application in the next financial year.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

8.15pm – Cllr Lindsay returned to the meeting.

25.2 **To consider an application for a Service Level Agreement with Blandford Opportunity Group**

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

Cllrs S Hitchings, Cllr L Hitchings and Stevens declared an interest as members of the Blandford Opportunity Group.

8.15pm – Cllrs S Hitchings, L Hitchings and Stevens left the meeting during discussion and voting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, but not SECONDED that the Committee approves a grant for a period of two years at £1,000 a year. After discussions, Cllr White withdrew his recommendation.

It was then PROPOSED by Cllr Lindsay, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (5 in favour, 3 non-votes) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

The Committee supports a grant of £1,000 and will look favourably to a further grant application in the next financial year.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

8.25pm – Cllrs S Hitchings, L Hitchings and Stevens returned to the meeting.

26. **REVIEW OF ASSET REGISTER**

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lindsay, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that

The Committee approves the Town Council's Asset Register.

Cllr Lindsay thanked the RFO for her efforts in compiling the register and keeping it up to date.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

27. **UPDATE OF THE SUITABILITY OF PURCHASING THE CCLA PROPERTY FUND**

The paper was noted (see Appendix L).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED unanimously that

The Committee notes and approves the report at Appendix L.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

28. **CONFIDENTIAL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Robinson and AGREED unanimously that

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

28.1 Town Clerk's Report

28.1.1 Administrative Assistant – This post holder requested flexible working and now works 27.5 hours from September 2017 with Wednesdays off.

28.1.2 Training – This year's training records show an increase in training for ground staff, due to the high turnover of staff that has taken place this year. It shows a drop in attendance from the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk, apart from the Clerks' Seminar in September. All staff are due to attend Fire Warden Training on the 31st October. Councillor attendance is on the up to a total of 10 events attended.

28.2 To note the Town Clerk's Appraisal (in accordance with Standing Orders) – Cllr Lindsay confirmed that, when she was Chairman of Council in 2016/17, both she and the then Finance & Staffing Committee Chairman, Cllr Butler, carried out the Town Clerk's appraisal on 27th April 2017. No issues were raised and the Town Clerk was commended for her efforts and achievements, particularly with the Quality Gold award.

28.3 To receive a report regarding the Town Council's salaries budget and current workload and consider suggestions for the remainder of 2017/2018 and the 2018/2019 budget

The paper was noted (see Appendix M).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 against) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

28. CONFIDENTIAL (cont)

28.3 To receive a report regarding the Town Council's salaries budget and current workload and consider suggestions for the remainder of 2017/2018 and the 2018/2019 budget

The Committee approves the recommendations at Appendix M, excluding the proposal of additional hours for Employee No. 51 as this is not required, and requests that any positions not included at this time are considered in March 2018. In addition, the Committee resolves to commit the underspend of the Salaries budget to be carried over into the 2018/19 financial year.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED (7, 1 abstention) that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that

The Councillor Allowance is increased by £50 and the Chairman/Mayoral allowance is also to be increased by £50, in line with other councils of a similar size. The Committee rejected any proposals to increase it in line with the District Councillor allowances.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

The Meeting closed at 9:46pm.

SIGNED: **DATED:**

