

**BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee**  
**held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 7:02 pm held in the Corn Exchange**



**PRESENT**

Cllr S Hitchings – Committee Chairman	Cllr R Carter
Cllr C Stevens – Acting Vice Chairman (Vice Chairman of Council)	
Cllr L Hitchings – Chairman of Council	Cllr H White
Cllr H Mieville – Chairman of T&GP	Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman of R&A
Cllr A Cross	

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Town Clerk	Operations Manager
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**IN ATTENDANCE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Nicci Brown – Press

**24. PUBLIC SESSION**

- 24.1 Daniel Cadisch, Citizens Advice Dorset – Daniel summarised the essential work the CA has carried out during a difficult time with the impact of the pandemic, fuel and food poverty and the organisation anticipates additional pressures on its services in the coming years. Daniel thanked the Town Council for its financial support, which has been much appreciated.
- 24.2 David Pardoe and Les Benham, Blandford Boxing Club – David explained that they are eager to establish a home for the Club and would like to expand the Club's offer to its members. The new Police & Crime Commissioner has expressed his support for the Club. Les added that they have high demand for the sport, but they do not have the space and they are losing members to surrounding towns who do have the facilities.
- 24.3 Gail Del Pinto, Blandford Food Bank – Gail updated Councillors on the work of the Food Bank, which works in partnership with numerous local organisations and schools. The majority of clients come from Blandford. The work of the Food Bank goes beyond food, with support for improving IT skills and passing on reconditioned laptops and they are looking into establishing a Pantry for Blandford. Gail confirmed that it would no longer be a requirement for the council representative to the Food Bank to be an active Christian, although some conversations would need to remain private due to the nature of the organisation.

**25. APOLOGIES**

Cllr P Osborne – Committee Vice Chairman

The Chairman asked Cllr Stevens to act as Vice Chairman for the Committee meeting in Cllr Osborne's absence, which was supported by members.

**26. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Agenda Item No. 14 – Budget 2022/2023

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

**A dispensation is granted to all Councillors, except Cllr L Hitchings and Cllr Cross (as they do not live in the parish of Blandford Forum), to enable them to participate in discussion and vote on the setting of the council tax.**

With the Committee's permission, the following agenda item was brought forward for consideration due to members of the public being in attendance to hear the outcome.

27. **TO CONSIDER THE CONTINUATION OF EXISTING SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW ONES**

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

Citizens Advice Dorset

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

**The SLA with Citizens Advice Dorset is continued for a further three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and the offer is increased to £3,500 per annum (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

Blandford Boxing Club

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mievile, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED (4 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**An SLA is introduced with the Blandford Boxing Club with funding of £15,000 in year one, £2,500 in year two and £2,500 in year three subject to meeting the criteria and membership targets stated in the Club's report (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Cross but not voted on that the Boxing Club should apply for a grant instead of an SLA.

Blandford Food Bank

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

**The principle of an SLA is agreed to with Blandford Food Bank, subject to further discussions and receipt of supporting information.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

Review of Service Level and Service Provision Agreements

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 abstention) that

**A working group is set up to consider the content of the service level agreements and all committee members will be invited to attend.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

27. **TO CONSIDER THE CONTINUATION OF EXISTING SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW ONES (cont)**

Fashion Museum

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 abstention) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**The SLA with the Fashion Museum is increased to £2,500 a year for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

Information Centre

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**The SLA with the Information Centre is continued at £2,000 a year for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

Cllr White left the meeting.

Town Museum

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

**The SLA with the Town Museum is continued at £2,000 a year for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

TREADS

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

**The SLA with TREADS is continued and reduced – at their request – to £2,000 a year for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

Cllr White returned to the meeting.

Youth Centre

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

**The SLA is brought to an end at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, due to the lack of claims for the funds, and the Youth Centre is asked to submit a fully costed business plan in order to continue the SLA for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**27. TO CONSIDER THE CONTINUATION OF EXISTING SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW ONES (cont)**

Blandford Stour Valley Band

Cllr White declared an interest as a member of the Blandford Stour Valley Band.

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

**The Service Provision Agreement with the Blandford Stour Valley Band is continued at £1,500 a year for a period of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**28. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED unanimously that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

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

- 29.1 Staffing/Recruitment – There are funds committed for an additional member of office staff when required and the Town Clerk explained that this has not been prioritised due to the ongoing workload and capacity, but a recruitment pack will be put together in January/February and run past the Committee Chairman, possibly with a different job title than that stated in the payroll budget.

**30. ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

- 30.1 Administration Budget for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

- 30.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

- 30.3 Reserves Accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

**31. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION**

- 31.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the list of cheque payments 011121-011127 (Sheet 869) totalling £430.83

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

**The list of cheque payments 011121-011127 (Sheet 869) totalling £430.83 are received and retrospectively approved.**

- 31.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 (sheets 187-189) totalling £85,697.59

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

**The direct debit payments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 (sheets 187-189) totalling £85,697.59 are received and retrospectively approved.**

**31. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION (CONT)**

31.3 There were no BACS payments to retrospectively approve

31.4 There were no CHAPS payments to retrospectively approve

31.5 To receive and retrospectively approve Online Faster Payments FP059 to FP069 totalling £499,325.32 (includes transfers to other Town Council bank accounts)

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

**Online Faster Payments FP059 to FP069 totalling £499,325.32 are approved retrospectively.**

31.6 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

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

**The Investment Account for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 is approved retrospectively.**

31.7 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash check

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

31.8 Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

**32. TO RECEIVE THE INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

**33. REVIEW OF VARIABLE DIRECT DEBITS**

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

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

**The variable direct debits are approved.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**34. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS**

34.1 Blandford Environmental Trust

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

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

**A grant of £345 is approved (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**35. TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DORSET PARISH INDEPENDENT RENUMERATION PANEL**

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (4 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstentions) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**The Councillor allowance is not increased.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**36. CONFIDENTIAL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville 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.**

**36.1 To receive the Payroll budget (staff grading) for the year 2022/23**

The paper was tabled (see Appendix K).

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

**The staff grading for 2022/23 is approved as per the tabled document and is signed by the Committee Chairman.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

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

**The public and press were welcomed back into the meeting for the following items;**

**37. CONSIDERATION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2022/23**

**37.1 Consideration of the proposed revenue budget for Administration Costs for 2022/23**

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

**The proposed Administration budget is accepted.**

**37.2 Recommendations from Committees**

The paper was noted (See Appendix L).

**37.2.1 Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Minute No. 20 – Consideration of the proposed budget for the financial year 2022/2023 and recommendation to Finance and Staffing Committee Meeting**

At the R&A committee meeting, it was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (4 in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to the Finance & Staffing Committee that it**

**Includes a budget for the Cemetery Wall at £1,000 and sets the Earmarked Reserves at £16,500 for the 2022/23 financial year.**

37.2.2 Town & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Minute No. 32 – Consideration of the proposed budget for the year 2022/2023 and recommendation to Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting

Earmarked Reserves

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (7 in favour, 1 against) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to the Finance & Staffing Committee that it**

**The Town & General Purposes Committee Earmarked Reserves budget is approved at £10,500 for the 2022/2023 financial year.**

Reserve Accounts

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (6 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention) that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to the Finance & Staffing Committee that it**

**The Town & General Purposes Committee Reserves Account budget is approved for the 2022/2023 financial year by including £500 for the Railway Arches.**

37.3 To consider the inclusion of the Contingency budget lines for the T&GP and R&A Committees

The paper was tabled (see Appendix M).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**The Committees do not budget for Contingency each year, or move it to PPM or Town Improvements, but the amount will remain in Contingency and is ring-fenced to avoid adding to it each year. As a result of this action, the Recreation & Amenities Committee Earmarked Reserves are reduced to £16,000 and the Town & General Purposes Committee Earmarked Reserves are reduced to £10,000. This will be reflected in the overall budget.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

37.4 Consideration of the overall budget for the year 2021/22 and recommendation of the precept for 2022/23

The paper was tabled (see Appendix N).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that**

**The draft budget of £803,241 is approved for the 2022/2023 financial year (0% increase on the 2021/2022 budget).**

**This will be finalised at the Town Council meeting scheduled for Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**Post Meeting Note:** Following the actions from Minute No. 37.3, the draft budget to be considered by full council on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 is £802,241 for the 2022/2023 financial year (-0.13%).

The Meeting closed at 10:01 pm.

**SIGNED:** ..... **DATED:** .....