

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly
Held on Monday 25th April 2022 at 6.00pm in the Corn Exchange

DRAFT
Subject to confirmation

PRESENT

Cllr L Hitchings – Chairman
Cllr R Carter
Cllr H White
Cllr P Clark
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr C Jacques
Cllr L Lindsay
Cllr E Bray

Cllr C Stevens – Vice Chairman
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr P Osborne
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr A Cross
Cllr K Herbert
Cllr H Mieville – arrived at 6.08pm

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Assistant Town Clerk
David Eidelstein – TIC
Mark Williams – Treads
Terry Clarkson – RBL
Sarah Rampton – In Jolly Good Company

Operations Manager
Nicci Brown – Press
Daniel Cadisch – CAB
Joanne Hutson – Youth Centre
Kath Lane – Knees Up
Paula Harmon – Literary Festival

IN ATTENDANCE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Pat Pryor – Arts Reach

1. **APOLOGIES**

None

2. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY HELD ON 26th APRIL 2021**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Clark and AGREED (12 in favour, 3 abstentions) that the Minutes are APPROVED and SIGNED.

3. **CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL'S REPORT**

The Chairman of Council, Cllr L Hitchings, welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Assembly and read his annual report for the year 2021/2022.

4. **QUESTIONS**

No questions were asked.

5. **PRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

5.1 **David Eidelstein – TIC**

Mr Eidelstein reported that the financial injection of the Town Council is a lifeline for the TIC as other income has dried up, whereas expenses have not. This has helped to keep a high morale within the team, especially during the last few years. The TIC requires 24 volunteers, and it currently has 19. Three new volunteers have joined in the last few weeks, and they are hoping to get two more. They can cover all shifts and opening times have returned to normal. The team is looking at creating a new website. Enquires are increasingly from local people and they are very optimistic about the future. Cllr Holmes enquired if they would consider opening on a Sunday. Mr Eidelstein confirmed that there are no plans yet.

5. PRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS (cont.)

5.2 Daniel Cadisch – Citizens Advice

Mr Cadisch thanked the Town Council for its financial support and the prospect of a new SLA. The organisation has been incredibly busy, and an impact report will be shared shortly. They have had an increase in clients of 11%. Mr Cadisch spoke about how his team deals with challenges daily and how they are looking forward to returning to their offices at the parish rooms. He thanked the parish rooms for their flexibility with challenges on ventilation and PPE. Mr Cadisch gave an overview of the issues clients seek support with and what the organisation is planning for the future. The team is working hard to ensure that people receive the right support. They are also working with Ukrainian refugees. The CA has received funding from the Primary Care Network to provide additional support at the surgery one day a week.

Cllr Bray left the meeting at 6.23pm.

5.3 Mark Williams – Treads

Mr Williams thanked the Town Council for their support and reported that Treads has been running for 23 years. At the beginning of the year a lot of their services were delivered online. He spoke about three projects they were mainly working on which are mental health, young carers and anti-bullying. Treads appointed two new Trustees recently and Mr Williams will be resigning from Treads. The Chairman thanked Mr Williams for all his work, which was echoed by Cllr Carter.

5.4 Cllr H White – Blandford Stour Valley Band

Cllr White reported that the Band has been practicing as much as possible outside, but due to Covid-19 they have not been able to play all their 10 performances. He invited members of the public to join the band, as they are always looking to recruit new members.

Cllr Bray returned at 6.33pm.

5.5 Jo Hutson – Youth Centre

Mrs Hutson reported that the youth centre is open three days a week again, with 60-70 young people attending. They have various young volunteers as well as two apprenticeships, all who attended the youth centre themselves. They are a community club as well as a youth club, running various groups where people can meet. They also house the Community Fridge. The youth club is still using funds from William Williams to provide school uniform. The premise is used as a drop of session for donations for Ukraine. They also have a new committee and are starting outreach work in Blandford and surrounding area.

5.6 Terry Clarkson – Blandford and District Royal British Legion

Mr Clarkson spoke about the display board that was bought with a grant received from the council and advised that it has been very well received. The board is portable, and Mr Clarkson reported where it has been on display so far. It is a community board, which they are happy to lend out to other groups. The second grant received enabled the RBL to purchase a substantial gazebo, which they are also happy to lend out to other groups. Mr Clarkson thanked the council for its generosity.

Cllr Lindsay left the meeting at 6.46pm.

5.7 Life Education Wessex

The Chairman read out parts of the following report, which was sent prior to the meeting.

5. PRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS (cont.)

In July 2021, we received your grant of £430 towards the cost of our visit to Archbishop Wake CE Primary School. The visit took place on the 6th and 7th July 2021, and we delivered our workshops to approximately 180 children in Years 4, 5 and 6.

For information purposes, the total cost of the 2-day visit was £1,140. The school contributed £710 plus £430 gratefully received from yourselves.

Just to recap...

Life Education Wessex & Thames Valley provides age-appropriate health, well-being and drug prevention education programmes to children to provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make positive, healthy choices. Our charity has been working with young children since the 1990s and we are the only charity providing an 8-year health, well-being and drug education programme.

The COVID pandemic and lockdowns proved particularly challenging for the children, schools and communities. We are particularly concerned for the mental health and wellbeing of children and the effect isolation has had on their emotional wellbeing. How children react can vary according to their age, how they understand information and communicate their previous experiences and how they cope with stress. Negative reactions may include worrying thoughts and their concern for their friends and family, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping and physical symptoms. Children also react to what they see from parents/carers and how they deal with situations around them. Family concerns about financial problems and job security can also affect children's sense of security, leading to anxiety and depression. Lack of routine, space, contact with other children and reduced opportunities for physical activity affects children's confidence and overall physical and mental health.

As a Delivery Partner of Coram Life Education, we have been able to deliver new workshops in schools that focus on the emotional health and wellbeing of children.

During our visit to Archbishop Wake CE Primary School, the children will have learnt;

- about healthy eating, including the problems of obesity*
- dealing with feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger and conflict*
- the importance of exercise, sleep, personal hygiene*
- friendship skills and coping strategies*
- respecting themselves and others online and in the real world*
- building confidence and self esteem*
- building resilience to risk, assertiveness and decision-making skills*
- tackling peer group pressure and bullying*
- correcting the misperceptions and dangers about alcohol, tobacco and drugs*

Due to the COVID restrictions in place at the time, we were unable to collect any feedback from the pupils and teachers. However, our Educator found the children's behaviour was excellent and pupils across the school were able to speak confidently about their knowledge and ideas.

Thank you once again for your much-valued support. We very much hope that you will consider supporting us in future years.

5.8 Kath Lane – Knees Up

Ms Lane gave an overview of what the group provide to the over 50's. During Covid they signed a new lease for their premises. The Town Council gave a grant for a new defibrillator, which they are very grateful for.

5. PRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS (cont.)

Cllr Lindsay returned to the meeting at 6.50pm.

5.9 Sarah Rampton – In Jolly Good Company

Ms Rampton thanked the Town Council for the free hire of Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion. She spoke about the group and their volunteers and the activities they are doing. The group likes listening to local life music. She is very keen to work with other groups in the town and invited people to contact her if anyone is interested.

5.10 Pat Pryor - Artsreach

Ms Pryor detailed the work Artsreach do, which is promoting arts in the community and bringing shows to the Corn Exchange. Artsreach started in 2018. They offer free tickets to the Foodbank and Opportunity Group. Artsreach work with other cultural organisations in the town, like the museum and DRMS. She thanked the Town Council for the free hire.

5.11 Paula Harmon - Literary Festival

Ms Harmon read out the following report:

Blandford Literary Festival launched in November 2019 to great success. The initial festival ran over the period of a week and was hosted in various venues across the town.

Since then, the aim of the festival has remained the same: to put Blandford on the literary map, to give less well know authors a chance to talk about their books and to encourage creativity.

After the success of 2019, the intention had been to continue the momentum and return in 2020.

Of course that proved impossible due to the pandemic, although the Literary Festival committee continued to share events, an online mini-fest, competitions and information throughout the year.

As social distancing restrictions were still in place in 2021, we decided to trial a shorter festival in March 2022 when it was hoped that things would be easier to organise, the result being 'Festival of Words in a Day' which ran on 26th March 2022.

We have very little in the way of funds. Our committee is composed of four people, all of whom work full-time in other jobs and are therefore volunteers in terms of the Festival. Tickets were sold to raise revenue to run the event and cover authors' travel costs but with the additional hope that there would be sufficient to give a fee to authors as well and to have something in the kitty for future events. All authors were aware that a fee would only be paid if there were sufficient funds and accepted this when accepting the invitation to take part.

In order to run the event this time, for the sake of simplicity, we settled on three venues: The Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion and Blandford Library for the day events and The Dorset Rural Music School for the evening.

The Town Council kindly provided the use of the pavilion without a fee, the use of the library was free, and the music school accepted a donation for its use. Free refreshments, supplied by the committee, were provided at the pavilion. Refreshments, also supplied by the committee, were available at the music school in exchange for a donation.

We were able to honour our commitment to paying travel expenses and parking to visiting authors, but did not raise sufficient funds to give them a fee.

A major concern was and remains effective publicity. Online posters etc were created and shared on various social media platforms using expertise within the team and at our own time and expense.

Physical brochures were printed to be available at various venues in town in the run up to the day and a 'Meet the Authors' display banner was also bought. It was for this purpose that we used the Town Council's grant of £100 for which we are very grateful. Two hundred brochures were printed by Cheap Printing Dorset of Blandford at a cost of £90. The remaining £10 went towards the banner from Solopress which cost £25.69 and can be used for future events.

5. **PRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**
(cont.)

The Festival in a Day went very well. We had more than twenty authors involved, and events ranged from talks to workshops to an evening of poetry, prose, song (with something sparkly to drink).

We really want the literary festival to be regular event to raise the profile of the town which could bring in visitors and therefore revenue. If we can attract better known authors it will of course help, but this is difficult without funds. We would very much like to develop the festival into something which people talk about and keep it fresh and interesting, while keeping its roots firmly in the aims we started with: to put Blandford on the literary map, to showcase less well known authors and to encourage creativity.

We would like to thank the Town Council for its support and hope that you will want to work with us in the future. All suggestions and ideas, as well as any funding or help in fundraising, will be of course, gratefully received.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7:01pm.

SIGNED

DATED