

**BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee**  
**held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 7:02 pm held in the Corn Exchange**

**DRAFT**  
Subject to confirmation

**PRESENT**

Cllr L Hitchings – Committee Chairman  
Cllr A Cross – Committee Vice Chairman  
Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman of R&A

Cllr C Stevens – Chairman of Council  
Cllr S Hitchings  
Cllr H White

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Town Clerk

Operations Manager

**IN ATTENDANCE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Nicci Brown

Johnny Hindle

**14. PUBLIC SESSION**

- 14.1 David Pardoe, Blandford Boxing Club – Apologies had been received due to illness. Cllr L Hitchings reported that he had spoken to Mr Pardoe and there were several sessions running each week and Cllr White reported that William Williams had visited the club and were impressed by the set-up.

**15. APOLOGIES**

Cllr P Osborne  
Cllr H Mieville – Vice Chairman of Council

Cllr E Bray

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

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

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

**17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED unanimously that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

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

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

- 18.1 Payment Method for Salaries – The Town Council has been informed by Lloyds Bank that Telepay can no longer be used for payment of salaries, which is currently faxed to Telepay each month. This has now been changed to PCO Pay and will be set up in January 2023 for all staff, councillors and honorarium roles. The financial regulations have also been updated to PCO Pay instead of Telepay.
- 18.2 Salaries – In November, the Local Government Association came to an agreement on the 2022-23 pay offer the unions representing local government employees. The National Employers agreed in June that all local government staff would be offered a £1,925 pay rise,

## 18. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

equating to a 10.5% rise for the lowest paid staff and 4% for the highest paid. The rise was backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. As part of the offer, all employees regardless of their current leave entitlement or length of service, will receive a permanent increase of one day to their annual leave entitlement from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The National Joint Council has passed the pay offer. Unison and GMB agreed to the offer but Unite did not. Despite this the pay offer passed and was implemented by the Town Council in the November salaries, including the three leavers.

- 18.3 Role of RFO – Since the departure of the RFO, this position has been covered by existing staff with the assistance of an experienced finance officer and clerk to several parishes in Dorset. It is minuted that the responsibility accompanying the role of Responsible Financial Officer therefore lies with the Town Clerk (as per Standing Order 16a.).
- 18.4 Notification of external auditor appointment for the 2022-23 financial year for the 5 year period until 2026-27 – Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments (SAAA) has appointed an external auditor to Blandford Forum Town Council for the 5-year appointing period from 2022-23 until 2026-2, following a procurement exercise to appoint auditors to each contract area from 1 April 2022. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be completed in accordance with "proper practices" as set out in '*Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England, a Practitioners' Guide*', and then be published in accordance with any applicable Transparency Code. The Town Council's Audit Appointment for 2022-23 to 2026-2027 will be BDO LLP in Southampton. The following fees have been determined by SAAA following consultation for the Audit Years 2022-23 to 2026-27. Table 1 sets out the scales of audit fees for smaller authorities that complete their AGAR fully and accurately within the required timescales and provide the necessary supporting information and any explanations sought. The fee scales exclude Value Added Tax, which will be charged at the prevailing rate on all work undertaken.

INCOME/EXPENDITURE BAND (£)	FEE FOR LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW (£)
400,001 - 500,000	1,050
500,001 - 750,000	1,365
750,001 - 1,000,000	1,680
1,000,001 - 2,000,000	2,100
2,000,001 - 3,000,000	2,520
3,000,001 - 4,000,000	2,940
4,000,001 - 5,000,000	3,360
5,000,001 - 6,500,000	3,780

- 18.5 Training – All staff received manual handling and fire warden training this morning in the Corn Exchange.

## 19. ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE FOLLOWING:

### 19.1 Administration Budget for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

### 19.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

### 19.3 Reserves Accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

## 20. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION

### 20.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the 011131-32 (Sheet 873-874) totalling £320.50

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

**The cheque payments 011131-32 (Sheets 873-874) totalling £320.50 are received and retrospectively approved.**

### 20.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 (sheets 199-201) totalling £90,691.56

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

**The direct debit payments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 (sheets 199-201) totalling £90,691.56 are received and retrospectively approved.**

### 20.3 To receive and retrospectively approve Online Faster Payments FP103 to FP123 totalling £538,085.99

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

**Online Faster Payments FP103 to FP123 totalling £538,085.99 (includes payments to other Town Council bank accounts and transfer of precept) are received and retrospectively approved.**

Cllr L Hitchings suggested that all Councillors receive the email containing all the payments in the future, which was supported by the Town Clerk.

### 20.4 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

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

**The Investment Account for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 is approved retrospectively.**

### 20.5 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash check

Cllr L Hitchings had not been able to confirm the petty cash check, which will therefore be deferred until Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022. However, he was able to confirm that the monthly bank reconciliation had been undertaken during the period and was in order.

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

### 20.6 Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

## 21. INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

**22. REVIEW OF VARIABLE DIRECT DEBITS**

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

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

**The variable direct debits are approved.**

**23. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS**

**23.1 Blandford Food Bank+**

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

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

**A grant is not approved for the purchase of items for Blandford Food Bank+ on this occasion due to the current SLA the Town Council has in place for £5,000 a year and recommends that the Food Bank approaches local charities such as William Williams who fund these types of requests.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

**24. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME AND CONSIDER EXPENDITURE APPROVAL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED (5 in favour, 1 abstention) that

**The Committee agrees to offer this scheme to the interested employee, approving expenditure authority from the Salaries budget line 4400, with an agreement in place between the Town Council and the employee seeking repayment over a period of 12 months (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**25. CONFIDENTIAL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr White 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 Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.**

**25.1 To receive the Payroll budget (staff grading) for the year 2023/24**

The paper was tabled (see Appendix J).

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

**The staff grading for 2023/24 is approved as per the tabled document and is signed by the Committee Chairman.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

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

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

**26. CONSIDERATION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24**

**26.1 Consideration of the proposed revenue budget for Administration Costs for 2023/24**

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

**The proposed Administration budget is accepted, which includes an increase for the Deputy Town Crier and Deputy Mace Bearer to bring them in line with the amount paid to the other honorary roles. This is in recognition of their commitment to the role and the Town Council.**

**26.2 Recommendations from Committees**

The paper was noted (See Appendix L).

**26.2.1 Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 Minute No. 19 – Consideration of the proposed budget for the financial year 2023/2024 and recommendation to Finance and Staffing Committee Meeting**

**Earmarked Reserves**

At the Recreation & Amenities Committee meeting it was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and subsequently AGREED unanimously by the Finance & Staffing Committee that

**The earmarked reserves are set at £15,500, which is £500 less than last year's budget for the Recreation & Amenities Committee, for the 2023-24 financial year.**

**26.2.2 The Town & General Purposes Committee held 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 Minute No.33 - Consideration of the proposed budget for the year 2023/2024 and recommendation to Finance & Staffing Committee meeting**

At the Town & General Purposes Committee meeting, it was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Clark and subsequently AGREED unanimously by the Finance & Staffing Committee that

**The Town & General Purposes Committee earmarked reserves are set at £15,000 and £500 is included in the Capital Projects for the Railway Arches for the 2023-24 financial year.**

**26.3 Consideration of the overall budget for the year 2022/23 and recommendation of the precept for 2023/24**

The paper was tabled (see Appendix N).

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

**A contingency of £5,000 is reinstated in the overall budget and approximate costs are included for temporary storage, the Dorset Council loss of income as well as the office accommodation in relation to the Corn Exchange project. However, the Committee does not wish to see an increase any higher than 5%.**

**The draft budget is therefore approved for the 2023/2024 financial year, as it stands, however the precept will be finalised at the Town Council meeting scheduled for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022, subject to receipt of the accruals and underspend figures.**

**ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL**

The Meeting closed at 8:39 pm.

**SIGNED:** .....

**DATED:** .....