

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 19th December 2022 at 7:03 pm in the Corn Exchange



PRESENT

Cllr Stevens – Chairman of Council
Cllr A Cross
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr P Osborne
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr E Bray

Cllr H Mieville – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr P Clark
Cllr L Hitchings
Cllr H White
Cllr L Lindsay
Cllr R Holmes

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Responsible Financial Officer (via Microsoft Teams)
Graham Stanley – Dorset Council

Operations Manager
Nicci Brown
Giles Nicholson – Dorset Council

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting and invited Daniel Cadisch to update councillors on the work of the Citizens Advice.

100. PUBLIC SESSION

100.1 Daniel Cadisch, Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Central Dorset

Daniel updated Councillors on the increase in usage and confirmed that the Citizens Advice (CA) helped 360 people with issues between April to September and 1,100 over the financial year. Daniel explained that a large part of the extra work is helping people through crisis, particularly with the cost-of-living crisis and navigating the maze of welfare benefits.

There is a large increase with charitable support required and 31% of activity is helping people apply for grants which is a change over the previous year. Emergency help is also being accessed for pre-payment meter support and the household support fund, which is the national government funding that comes through to Dorset Council and the CA assists with the distribution of that funding.

There has been high demand for energy advice and a plethora of people coming through about direct debits increasing significantly. Inflation is at a 30 year high and the CA is pleased that benefits will be increasing with inflation. Mortgage costs are also rising with unaffordable increases. Furthermore, people have been through the pandemic and are then facing numerous additional pressures and there has also – unfortunately – been an increase in aggression, which is understandable considering the pressures people are under but this is not tolerated and the CA is working to support their staff.

The household support fund is being renewed from April 2023 and the CA needs to make sure the money goes to the people most in need.

The CA is providing a face-to-face service in Blandford Forum four days a week for residents from January, in addition to their online services.

Daniel thanked the council for donating a room to the CA on Fridays, which has been busy since the sessions started there, and for its ongoing support.

100.2 Civic Report

The paper was sent to Councillors via email.

100. PUBLIC SESSION (cont)

100.3 Report from Dorset Council Councillors

Cllr Lacey-Clarke invited DC officers, Giles Nicholson and Graham Stanley to the meeting to talk about the issues previously raised about the disposal of grass and rubble previously raised at a council meeting.

Giles explained the scope of their work to the council and Graham clarified that the grass piles are part of the cut and collect method they have in place. He stated that there is no difference in the methane release from the heap of grass than it being left in several locations. It is the same volume and the same cycle. Stour Meadows and the Milldown get cut and the cuttings are removed by a local farmer. The rubble by the Milldown was transported from the Marsh & Ham for constructing the access to the Milldown extension.

Graham thanked the council for its financial contribution to the Milldown extension and provided an update on the project. The 70 trees and 3,000 hedge plants that have been ordered will be planted in January.

Councillors asked questions and thanked the Rangers for their work and support, specifically mentioning Matthew Chester's attendance at the CUBC litter picks and other local events.

Cllr Lacey-Clarke added that the Langton crossroads works are paused and the paving works are due to recommence in January.

100.4 Climate Change & Biodiversity

Dorset Council's Steve Ford attended the online meeting held last Tuesday and updated attendees on the work they are doing to decarbonise their estate and are now looking at how they can bring people across Dorset together to focus on a single plan.

100.5 BFTC Commemoration Group

The group is looking at holding events in 2024 to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

100.6 Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – Blandford +

The Regulation 14 consultation for the modification review started on Wednesday 30th November 2022 and closes on 30th January 2023. Work was therefore carried out in the office to create an online survey, poster, social media posts, public facing consultations supported by the monitoring group and the compilation of the documentation in hard copy and on the website, along with the list of consultees ready for the launch.

101. APOLOGIES

Cllr Carter
Cllr B Quayle

Cllr C Jacques
Cllr K Herbert

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

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings 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.

103. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28th November 2022

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED (10 in favour, 2 abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

104. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

- 104.1 Street Trading – The Dorset Council has asked the Town Council to complete its preliminary questionnaire on Street Trading, which has been done by the Town Clerk and Market Manager.
- 104.2 Public Conveniences – Letters have been sent to parish councils who have previously contributed to the running of the toilets in town and Charlton Marshall Parish Council has already agreed to commit another £500 for the 23/24 financial year.
- 104.3 Sovereign Housing – Thanks have been received from Sovereign for the family Christmas show held on Sunday 4th December 2022.
- 104.4 Town Hall / Corn Exchange Hirers Consultation – From the 13 regular hirers emailed on 25th October 2022, three replies have been received from those who would like to be involved in a workshop/meeting, which will be held with the architect in the New Year.
- 104.5 Community Fridge – There are two new volunteers who have started their Food & Hygiene training, kindly provided free of charge by Volunteer Centre Dorset. They will carry out evening collections from January. In addition, a £400 donation has been received and they would like to remain anonymous. Festive puddings and treats have been purchased to distribute to visitors to the fridge, which are being very well received.
- 104.6 Civic Carol Service – The office has received very positive feedback for the organisation of the civic carol service and the Mayor wrote to thank staff for their efforts.
- 104.7 Bus Shelter – The bus shelter has arrived and the Dorset Council officer quoting for the installation works has been approached and a response is awaited.
- 104.8 Personal Safety – The Chief Executive of the DAPTC has invited the Town Clerk to attend a course, which is specifically for councillors regarding personal safety as part of their councillor role. This is booked for Tuesday 21st February 2023 and discussions will then be held about its suitability for a bulk purchase for councils throughout Dorset.

105. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

105.1 Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting dated 12th December 2022

105.1.1 Recommendations

Minute No. 23 – To Consider Grant Applications

Blandford Food Bank+

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lindsay, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED unanimously 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 CLERK

7:56 pm – Cllr Lindsay left the meeting.

Minute No. 26.3 – Consideration of the overall budget for the year 2022/23 and recommendation of the precept for 2023/24

At the Finance & Staffing committee meeting, it was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings and AGREED unanimously that

105. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES (CONT)

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 19th December 2022, subject to receipt of the accruals and underspend figures.

Councillor Lacey-Clarke thanked the staff for their work on preparing the budget.

Cllr L Hitchings explained that the revenue figure and accruals figure have now been updated and the most recent version of the budget was shared with attendees. Following a discussion, it was PROPOSED by Cllr White, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED (11 in favour, 1 non-vote) that

The Town Council approves the budget and confirms the precept for 2023/2024 at £825,250 (an increase for a Band D property of £5.10 across the year, which equates to 2.25%).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

8:05 pm – Cllr Lindsay returned to the meeting.

105.1.2 To RECEIVE the Minutes

The minutes were RECEIVED.

105.1.3 Report by Committee Chairman on Petty Cash checks

This item was deferred from the Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting held on 12th December 2022 and Cllr L Hitchings confirmed that he had carried out a petty cash check, which was correct, and everything was found to be in order.

106. TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO DORSET COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION ON THE LOADING BAYS

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

The Market Manager provided comments. He has noticed that drivers are still parking in the loading bays on a regular basis which means the delivery vehicles are having to park nearby to unload. These bays should make it easier for delivery drivers to stop for short periods so that they are not taking up other parking places or risking parking tickets themselves. When the bays are free they are well used by appropriate vehicles but when on the market, and when delivering myself, they are often blocked. It may be the case that our local drivers need to get used to them.

It was agreed that the Market Manager's comments would be fed back to the Dorset Council officer.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

107. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

107.1 P/FUL/2022/06346 Shottsford House St Leonards Avenue Dorset Blandford Forum DT11 7PA Erect 1 no. single storey annexe

107. PLANNING APPLICATIONS (cont)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED unanimously that

The Town Council has no objections to the application (B+ Policy B11 applies).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

107.2 P/FUL/2022/06584 Coonor Milldown Road Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 7DD – Continue use as mixed use of dwelling-house and café & takeaway

Cllr Lindsay declared a personal interest, because she knows the applicant, and did not vote.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke and AGREED (8 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention, 1 non-vote) that

The Town Council has no objections to the application (B+ Policy B3 applies).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

107.3 P/FUL/2022/06532 Larksmead House 101 Salisbury Road Blandford Forum DT11 7SW Demolish existing buildings and erect 8 No. dwellings with parking.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED (8 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council has no objections to the application (B+ Policy B11 applies).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

108. TO RECEIVE A REPORT REVIEWING THE RAILWAY ARCHES OPENING TIMES AND ARRANGEMENTS

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED unanimously that

The opening hours are continued, and vandalism and usage of the arches continues to be monitored.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

109. REPORTS FROM THE COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

109.1 Dorset Rural Music School – Cllr Bray has been invited to become a governor of the Music School. They are having a new website built, which will include a music library that will generate revenue, and volunteers are carrying out maintenance work. They have ended their cleaning contract and now do this in-house, and the school is keen to become a hub within the community. There is talk of introducing music technology classes and a musical theatre choir, as well as a TikTok channel to increase their social media presence.

The meeting closed at 8:35 pm.

SIGNED

DATED