

**BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting**  
**Held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 7:03pm in the Corn Exchange**



**PRESENT**

Cllr Stevens – Chairman of Council  
Cllr A Cross  
Cllr S Hitchings  
Cllr R Holmes  
Cllr L Lindsay  
Cllr R Carter

Cllr H Mieville – Vice Chairman of Council  
Cllr L Hitchings  
Cllr K Herbert  
Cllr H White  
Cllr E Bray  
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Town Clerk  
Barrie Cooper

Operations Manager  
Nicci Brown

**130. PUBLIC SESSION**

Traffic Works at Wimborne Road Junction – Barrie Cooper enquired as to why the roadworks are taking so long at this junction. He added that he welcomes the footpath works on Salisbury Street.

Cost of Living Fund – Mr Cooper also asked about the distribution of the fund at Dorset Council and the Chairman advised that this would be answered by the Dorset Council Councillor.

Inclusivity – Following the arrival of Pride flag graffiti throughout the town centre, Cllr Bray raised concern over inclusivity in the town and was aware that the Town Council lit up the façade for the beginning of Pride month in June, but wondered what more could be done. Cllr Lacey-Clarke added to the previous matter raised by Cllr Bray and added his response to a discriminatory note he received in his shop and his intolerance of this. In addition, Cllr Bray commented that she was disappointed to hear that so many cafés in town stop serving food at 2:30pm. Cllr Carter mentioned that he had spoken to a café owner that closes earlier because there is little business at this time.

**131. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLORS**

Council Tax Increase – A 3.99% increase has been agreed by the Dorset Council, which equates to £1.40 a week increase in Band D properties.

Cost of Living Support – At the next Cabinet meeting, there will be more information on how the fund is being distributed.

Wimborne Rd/East St Junction – The roadworks are due to be completed soon. Cllr Mieville asked what the main improvements are and Cllr Lacey-Clarke explained about the required works regarding the change in traffic lights.

Gigaclear – Residents had contacted Cllr Lacey-Clarke and Cllr Quayle regarding access to their properties during works carried out by Gigaclear.

Anniversary – County Hall is going to fly the Ukrainian flag on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023, which will mark the one-year anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

Tree Planting – Dorset Council tree planting will take place with civic guests on 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 11am on the new extension of The Milldown.

Boots – Cllr Lacey-Clarke updated on a meeting with regional directors from Boots and said it went very well and was a positive meeting with several changes to be put in place as well as improvements to the East Street chemist.

Cllr Cross asked about the continuation of the free car park at Stour Meadows.

**132. APOLOGIES**

Cllr C Jacques  
Cllr P Clark

Cllr B Quayle  
Cllr P Osborne

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

None

**134. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 30<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Holmes, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (9 in favour, 3 abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

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

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

Market Transfer from Dorset Council – An email was received from a senior solicitor at Dorset Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 to advise that their senior colleague is now looking at the document as amended, and they hope to have a draft to send out to the Town Council in the next few weeks. The Town Council has been awaiting, and pursuing, the transfer of the market from NDDC/DC since taking on the service in 2016.

Planter Sponsorship – The Mayor's Assistant has distributed renewal letters to everyone who sponsored a planter last year.

Remembrance Road Closure – The Mayor's Assistant has submitted the road closure application, which includes consultation with local organisations.

Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Conference – The Town Clerk will be attending the first Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Conference, which is being held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February at the Bovington Tank Museum from 6pm to 10pm. There will be talks and a facilitated session, as well as an update on the Armed Forces Covenant legislation and work of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. The focus of the facilitated session will be to look at future shared or individual actions to embed the Covenant locally and ensure the Armed Forces community is supported. There will also be a number of exhibitors. As numbers are limited to 100 attendees, they have invited just a few parish/town councils that have an obvious connection to the Armed Forces (Weymouth, Wareham, Swanage, Wool and Blandford Forum) as well as Neil Wedge at the DAPTC. Other invitees include Blandford Garrison, Dorset Council, Ministry of Defence, Dorset Healthcare, Op Courage, several Armed Forces charities, other community organisations, and welfare officers.

Residents with IT Issues – An 80-year-old housebound resident called the office seeking help with sending an image to his pharmacist. Unable to resolve the issues over the phone, the Town Clerk and Operations Manager visited the resident and were able to help him. As a result, the Town Clerk has spoken with the Digital Dorset team, who recommended the charity Ability Net. Should Councillors be aware of vulnerable residents, requiring IT guidance, the Digital Hotline for enquiries or to book a Volunteer Digital Champion session is 01305 221048.

App for Town Trail – Following the Chairman raising the trail app at a meeting with other councils in North Dorset and Visit Dorset, the Town Clerk has arranged a meeting with the Chairman, Visit Dorset Tourism Manager, the Business Support Officer, and representatives from the Information Centre and Town Museum. The Tourism Manager has suggested partnership working to create an online platform for Blandford Forum, which would be free of charge. It isn't an app but will be available online for people to view and use, with photographs, history, town trail and a map.

**135. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (cont)**

Blandford Forum Almshouse Charity – The notice has been received and displayed on social media, the website and the Town Council's notice boards.

One-Minute Silence – The Prime Minister will be leading the nation in silence at 11am on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023. The Mayor agreed to do this locally outside the Town Hall, which was supported by Councillors in attendance.

**136. CIVIC REPORT**

The paper was distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting (see Appendix B).

**137. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES**

None

**138. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR THE PLANTERS AND BEDDING.**

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lee Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (11 in favour, 1 non-vote) that

**The Town Council approves the expenditure for the planters and bedding of £4,422.40 + VAT using funds from the Planters budget line (6200) (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8) and that the planter sponsorship costs are reviewed as part of the annual hire charges review in January.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**139. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR THE TOILET CLEANING CONTRACT FOR 2023/2024**

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

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

**The Town Council renews the cleaning contract with the existing contractor for a period of one year only, using funds of £8347.68 from budget line 6650 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**140. TO CONSIDER EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY FOR IT PROPOSALS**

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

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

**The Town Council approves the recommended works to the IT systems, using funds from budget line 4040, totalling £5,600 + VAT, which excludes the monthly costs (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**141. TO CONSIDER ADDING TWO MORE CCTV CAMERA LOCATIONS IN THE TOWN**

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

**141. TO CONSIDER ADDING TWO MORE CCTV CAMERA LOCATIONS IN THE TOWN (CONT)**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lindsay, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (11 in favour, 1 abstention) that

**Councillors approve expenditure authority of £5,100 + VAT using funds from the CCTV new equipment budget line 1175 which has a balance of £14,161.40 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**142. TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FOR A MEMORIAL BENCH FOR DR MICHAEL LE BAS**

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

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

**The Town Council approves the proposed design using funds of £595, plus the cost of the plaque, from budget line 1042 New Benches (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**143. TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO THE DLUHC NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION**

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

8:05 pm – Cllr Bray left the meeting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (11 in favour, 1 non-vote) that

**The Town Council delegates authority to the Chairman of Planning, Cllr Carter to respond based on NALC's draft submission.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

8:08 pm – Cllr Bray returned to the meeting.

**144. TO CONSIDER A SUBMISSION TO THE PLANNING INSPECTORATE REGARDING THE DEER PARK PLANNING APPLICATION APPEAL**

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

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

**The Town Council approves the amendments to the council's original objection, which has been updated and distributed by the Chairman of Planning, Cllr Carter (updated version can be [viewed here](#)). This will be submitted to the Inspectorate for the appeal and copied to the Member of Parliament.**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**145. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL'S PLAN**

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

**146. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND CONSIDER ANY REQUESTS FROM THE:**

**146.1 Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group**

The consultation statement will soon be prepared and presented for approval prior to submission to Dorset Council. Dorset Council will then run Regulation 16 consultation and appoint an examiner. The modification proposal is still on schedule for Council approval in March.

**146. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND CONSIDER ANY REQUESTS FROM THE: (CONT)**

**146.2 BFTC Commemoration Group**

The group is working towards the D-Day anniversary next year.

**146.3 Climate Change & Biodiversity**

A meeting is being held on Friday morning at 11:30am in Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion with Simon Hoare MP in attendance.

**146.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project**

No update at this stage.

**146.5 King's Coronation**

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (10 in favour, 1 against and 1 non-vote) that

**The previously agreed budget of £2,500 is used for the Town Council events and the outdoor live music event, being organised by members of the Yuletide and Georgian Fayre Committees, is underwritten up to £1,000 by the Town Council using funds from General Reserves, if required (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

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

**The Town Council approves expenditure for the window competition and treasure hunt, using funds from Tourism under the Town & General Purposes committee's earmarked reserves (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**

**ACTION: TOWN CLERK**

**147. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

None

The meeting closed at 8:34 pm.

**SIGNED .....**

**DATED .....**

### **Blandford Forum Town Council's (BFTC) Response to application P/FUL/2022/03963 for the development of the Deer Park, Crown Meadows, Blandford Forum; Proposal for Phased Temporary Accommodation – up to 40 caravans – for up to 5 years**

Whilst BFTC welcomes the generosity of contribution from the Rothermere Foundation and Bryanston RFE, we are opposed to this proposed development, even though temporary, because we believe that it contravenes national and local planning law and planning practice guidance and does not meet the tests for an exception site. BFTC also questions the appropriateness of the development for the identified group. The evidence base for BFTC's opposition is detailed below.

Blandford Forum has a long history (going back to 1914) of welcoming refugees to the town and local area and as a community and representatives of that community; we continue to do so no matter the national origin of the refugees.

Our first points of opposition are on concerned primarily with the sensitive nature of the environment in and around the proposed site.

#### **1. From Blandford Character Area appraisal 2019 (NDDC/DC):**

*3.8.3. 'The Crown Meadows (and Bryanston Park) are of vital importance in preserving the undeveloped setting of the town of Blandford and for enabling understanding its historic development. It forms part of the green undeveloped edge to the west of the town and lies within the Blandford, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area. It has two levels of interest; the first is its historical development and interest in its own right, the second in terms of its quality and role in providing a setting for the adjacent historic town of Blandford, Blandford St. Mary and a series of other grouped and individual heritage assets.'*

From **Heritage assessment** (NDDC 2014 concerning a planning application for the site extant at that time but still, we believe, relevant in this case):

*7.200'....., although 20th century development has left the group (i.e. Deer park Farm) less isolated than when constructed during the 19th century, the buildings still maintain a degree of isolation from the historic town and depict the 19th century development of the Deer Park and town generally. The group still relies upon the open Deer Park landscape for their setting and reinforcement of their role within the landscape and town's history.*

BFTC also refers to policies 7.202 and 7.205 which further expand on this.

#### **From the NPPF 2021: the following policies have relevance in this case:**

**189.** *'Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance..... These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.'*

**190.** *Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay, or other threats.*

The NPPF encourages good design as part of the wider remit for sustainable development. It states that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, (paragraph 126) and seeks to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and are visually attractive (paragraphs 127).

Paragraph 127 seeks to ensure that developments, among others: *"are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change"*.

Paragraph 130 further discusses the importance of developments being visually attractive:

*“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

*a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; (BFTC notes that there is no reference to the longevity or otherwise of the developments in question, relevant in this case)*

*b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, (and) layout*

**North Dorset District Council (NDDC) LP 2016 Policy 24 Design:** *[States that] ‘...all developments improve the character and quality of the area in which they are located’ and... A place with character exhibits positive, special and unique qualities that people can easily appreciate, giving it its own identity. In places that already have a positive image or character, the design of new development should respond to and reinforce locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture. In places where positive elements are lacking, proposals should seek to create a distinctive and coherent sense of place through the use of intelligent and imaginative design solutions.*

**The introduction of up to 40 Mobile homes albeit temporary into this sensitive and important conservation area, contravenes these national and area policies. These policies are also reflected locally in the Blandford plus Neighbourhood Plan (2021) (B+NP).**

Policy B14 – (The River Stour Meadows) States that:

*‘...development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that they will sustain and enhance the character and appearance of the River Stour Meadow and they will secure an opportunity for public access and enjoyment to the River Stour Meadows or where they are intended to replace a detrimental feature.*

*‘Proposals including proposed changes of use that are likely to have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the meadows or harm views towards or from Blandford Forum or ‘The Cliff’ (at Bryanston) will not be supported.’*

The site is within the Bryanston and Blandford St. Mary conservation areas and in very close proximity to the Blandford Conservation area, therefore the design policies of B+ NP (2021) B11, B12 and B13 also apply. Relevant elements of these are:

*‘Proposals within or affecting the setting of the Conservation Area must sustain and enhance its character and appearance and should demonstrate:*

*i. consistently high standard of design and detailing reflecting the **scale and character**, [of the area]*

*ii. the use of building materials and finishes which are sympathetic to the area, (B12)*

*iii. no harmful impact on the townscape and roofscape’ (again, the longevity of the development is not in question)*

BFTC does not accept the applicant’s contention from the *Planning statement* (4.2 and 4.3) that the permission given in 2/2016/0892/OUT for two partially subterranean eco homes to the east of the proposed site is relevant to the current application. In particular BFTC does not agree that: [the] *‘guiding principle (for these two buildings) has been recognised in the design process of the proposed development at Deer Park Farm, with the design ensuring the proposal’s scale, siting and location minimises its effect on the landscape.’* There is little comparison to be made between 40 mobile homes and two eco houses in a less visible part of the site.

In summary, the proposed placement of up to 40 mobile homes would form an unsightly and unwelcome intrusion in this environmentally and historically sensitive site, even on a temporary, basis and would do significant harm to the setting and character of all three conservation areas, and therefore runs contrary to all the above policies. Moreover, if granted, this application might set a dangerous precedent in planning law for future developments of this location, as it will effectively become a Brownfield site.

**2. BFTC is also opposed to the application on grounds of exception to meet an urgent National and Local need. BFTC does not believe that this meets the tests for a local exception site.**

The site is outside of the settlement boundary of Blandford Forum, and is therefore classed as the 'countryside', defined in the adopted Local Plan as: "*Land outside of the settlement boundaries for the towns and larger villages identified in Local Plan Part 1*". (NDDC LP 2016)

The relevant Local Plan Policy is '**20. Countryside**'; the overriding thrust of which is restraint.

*Policy 20 states: Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if:*  
a) *it is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the relevant policies of the Local Plan, summarised in Figure 8.5; or*  
b) *for any other type of development, it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside.*

Other than quoting national refugee statistics, assertion, supposition and anecdotal evidence, the applicant has not demonstrated that there is an '*overriding need*' locally, nor does this application demonstrate a local need for rural exception affordable housing; in any event, it is not applicable on this site adjacent to Blandford Forum's settlement boundary (Policy 9 of the adopted Local Plan is engaged and applies).

It is therefore the contention of BFTC that this type of development is not relevant to this application because the test of exception is not met.

### **3. Another B+ NP policy engaged and of relevance and concern to BFTC and local residents is Policy B7 Health:**

***'all residential proposals will only be permitted where they provide...the delivery of essential health and or wellbeing facilities and services required to serve the scale of the development proposed'***

The applicant has not demonstrated how this will be achieved.

### **4. Appropriateness**

Finally, whilst accepting the possible need for more accommodation locally for refugees, BFTC is opposed to the development on the grounds its appropriateness, which we believe is a material consideration in this for the identified group of refugees, or indeed any refugees. The applicant offers no evidence other than again, assertion, supposition and anecdotal, that this type of development would be acceptable to the identified group. Whilst we welcome the desire of the applicant to provide accommodation for refugees, the creation of a semi-isolated and a semi self-contained mobile home park on the fringe of Blandford, would possibly lead to an increased sense of isolation and alienation of the identified group.

BFTC would urge the applicant to engage with the relevant bodies locally at parish, county and perhaps national level to discover how best to use the actual and implied generosity imbedded in this application to assist refugees in finding appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

Blandford Forum Town Council  
Updated February 2023