

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 30th January 2023 at 7:05 pm in the Corn Exchange



PRESENT

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

Cllr H Mieville – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr P Clark
Cllr K Herbert
Cllr H White
Cllr B Quayle

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Nicci Brown

Operations Manager
Cllr L Hitchings (online via Microsoft Teams)

110. PUBLIC SESSION

Nicci Brown spoke about the TrailTale agenda item and the possibility of working together with other local organisations.

111. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLORS

Cllr Quayle confirmed that council tax increase for Dorset Council is just under 4%, and it aims to protect frontline services. Since 2019, Dorset Council has made efficiency savings of £76m. Dorset Council is to receive £4.5m over the next two years to proceed with projects including social care. They successfully bid for £19.5m to regenerate Weymouth, which was announced last week.

Information is being sent out to residents in areas where parking is causing issues and blocking the roads, which prevent the waste vehicles from accessing certain areas.

The cold weather has meant the roads have been impacted on and potholes are appearing. Cllr Quayle advised that these can be reported to him or online.

Dorset Council has received an appeal regarding the Deer Park planning application and encouraged councillors and residents to get involved.

Cllr Mieville wrote to NHS England, who responded to his letter, and asked Cllr Quayle if there had been any developments with the pharmacy issue. From April, NHS England is giving up the commissioning of the pharmacies and NHS Dorset will be dealing with it instead, which is welcomed. He explained that there are three stages to the issue; working with the surgery, approaching Boots and a national issue with the lack of pharmacists. Cllr Quayle is collecting evidence that demonstrates the severity of the issue.

The Damory Street / Langton Road crossroad works should be completed on 17th February 2023 and the slab replacement works are due to recommence on 27th February.

112. APOLOGIES

Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr E Bray

Cllr R Carter
Cllr C Jacques

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

None

114. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19TH DECEMBER 2022

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED (9 in favour, 2 abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

115. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

115.1 Position of Responsible Financial Officer – Amanda Crocker is the new Responsible Financial Officer for the Town Council.

115.2 Commonwealth Day Event – An internal discussion was held over the future of a Commonwealth Day event and the possibility of just flying the flag. Photos were checked from last year as were attendances from councillors, invited guests and schools. With Archbishop Wake Primary School having the highest numbers of attendees, the headmaster was asked if he felt it was worth proceeding. He confirmed that it is a worthwhile event that supports pupils in understanding that they/we/the UK are part of something bigger and it fits beautifully with the work the school does on British Values; specifically, respect and tolerance. The event will therefore proceed at the Town Hall on Monday 13th March at 10am.

115.3 Mayoral Scroll – Staff carefully unrolled the Mayoral Scroll earlier this month and discovered that the first signature for the position of Justice of the Peace for the Borough of Blandford Forum was dated 9th November 1843! This was signed by Councillor Thomas Hodges Bennett and witnessed by Councillor Pond and Councillor Barnes. Councillor Hodges would have been a Justice of the Peace by virtue of his office as Mayor. The scroll covers a period of seven monarchs and 33 Prime Ministers. The Justices of the Peace would consider cases in the Magistrates Court, which is the room upstairs in the Town Hall (1734), with prisoners/defendants being held in the room next door, which is now known as the Council Chamber. It would appear that, due to legal reform, the first entry with a Councillor being referred to as Mayor of Blandford Forum and not Justice of the Peace was 1968. Cllr Stevens pledged allegiance to HM King Charles III in September following the demise of HM Queen Elizabeth II so that we had a record of the event. Some photos are shown below of the first submission, the complete scroll, and the length of the entire document.

115.4 Ex-Councillor – The Town Clerk reported that, sadly, ex-Councillor Richard Stewart-Hanney passed away last week.

116. CIVIC REPORT

The paper was distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting (see Appendix B). Cllr Mieville added that the Mayor had omitted his Civic Day from the report, which was held last Wednesday and was very well received by the Mayors in attendance with a number of compliments and thanks sent in the following day. The Chairman and Vice Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for the presentations and the Mayor's Assistant for the excellent organisation of the day.

117. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

117.1 Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting dated 23rd January 2023

117.1.1 Recommendations

None

117.1.2 To RECEIVE the Minutes

The Minutes were RECEIVED.

118. TO APPROVE THE COUNCIL DIARY FOR 2023/2024

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

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

The council diary for 2023/24 is approved, subject to amending the text layout in the month of November and confirming the date of the Yuletide Festival as 1st December 2023.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

119. TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FOR MARKING THE CORONATION OF HM KING CHARLES III

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Holmes, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (9 in favour, 2 abstentions) that

The free parking day originally agreed for the Saturday is now held on the Sunday to coincide with the main community event.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (7 in favour, 3 against and 1 non-vote) that

The Town Council organises the following events to mark the King's Coronation:

Friday 5th May 2023

- 'King's Concert' in the Corn Exchange with free tickets and the Mayor's Charity is offered the opportunity to provide refreshments in the kitchen.

Saturday 6th May 2023

- Coronation Day televised.

Sunday 7th May 2023

- Live music event and picnic from 12pm to 5pm in the Corn Exchange, with the Market Place parking area being closed off for tables and chairs.
- Coronation concert from Windsor televised in the evening.
- Free parking.

Monday 8th May 2023 – Bank Holiday

- Free parking
- Drop in / Expo-style event in the Corn Exchange 11am-3pm, with staff inviting local groups/organisations/businesses representing interests of the King with a focus on the theme of volunteering ('The Big Help Out').

A working group is formed of Cllrs Holmes, Clark, Lindsay Mieville and Stevens and a meeting is held as soon as possible.

A budget of £2,500 is allocated for the Coronation events using funds from General Reserves (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

120. TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION FROM THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross that the Town Council does not submit a formal response and Councillors respond as individual Councillors, which was SECONDED by Cllr Mieville but NOT AGREED (5 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention) with the Chairman having the casting vote against responding.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

121. TO CONSIDER EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY FOR THE FOOTFALL COUNTER IN THE MARKET PLACE

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes but NOT AGREED (4 in favour, 6 against and 1 abstention) that the Town Council authorises expenditure of £3,000 + VAT for a year of the footfall monitoring device (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

122. TO CONSIDER EXPENDITURE AND PROPOSED LOCATION FOR A MEMORIAL BENCH

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lindsay, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (10 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council purchases one of the bench designs at approximately £950 + VAT + delivery and approves the proposed location of the Victorian Garden, awaiting confirmation from the Town Museum, using funds from budget line 1042 New Benches (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

123. TO RETROSPECTIVELY APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR INSPECTIONS OF THE CHAPEL BELLCOTE AND TOWN HALL URNS

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

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

Councillors retrospectively approve expenditure of £2,560 from the Corn Exchange Capital project budget line 1105 for the Town Hall urn inspections and £2,110 from the PPM budget line for the Chapel bellcote inspection (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

124. TO CONSIDER INTRODUCING A TRAILTALE TO BLANDFORD FORUM

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was proposed by Cllr Cross that the Town Council does not proceed with the app but following discussion, and in anticipation of the Town Museum's input, it was PROPOSED by Cllr Osborne, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED unanimously that

The matter is deferred to the Planning meeting on 6th February 2023.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

125. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM THE BLANDFORD & DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The paper was noted (see Appendix J) and Cllr Quayle declared an interest due to his position of Branch President.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (9 in favour, 2 abstentions) that

The Town Council does not support this event by allocating one of the ten performance dates by the Blandford Stour Valley Band, as part of its Service Provision Agreement with the Band, since these performances are designated for Town Council events.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr L Hitchings suggested they may wish to apply for a grant.

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

126.1 Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group

The Regulation 14 Consultation on the Modification Review finishes today, 30th January 2023. There have been six responses via the online form, four written responses collected at the Thursday market and four responses via email. The responses will be collated and sent to the consultants for review and discussed at the next Blandford + monitoring group on the 9th February 2023.

126.2 BFTC Commemoration Group

The group is currently working towards plans for events to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

126.3 Climate Change & Biodiversity

Cllr Osborne reported back on the working group meeting held last Tuesday, with attendance from Isabella Ellis who is currently studying for a degree and joined the meeting online from Sweden. Cllr Osborne promoted the Sustainability Fair, which he and Cllr Mieville will be attending. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 24th February 2023 at 11:30am in Woodhouse Gardens and Simon Hoare MP will be in attendance.

126.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project

No update.

127. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

BLCCG – Cllr Carter distributed the minutes and data from the most recent BLCCG meeting to councillors prior to the meeting.

128. TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO PLANNING APPLICATION P/OUT/2021/00748 – LAND NORTH WARD'S DROVE, BLANDFORD ST MARY

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Mieville and AGREED (10 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council objects to the application and it does not agree with the allocation of this site for development, which is supported by the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan (B+NP). Although within the Blandford St Mary settlement

128. **TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO PLANNING APPLICATION P/OUT/2021/00748 – LAND NORTH WARD’S DROVE, BLANDFORD ST MARY (CONT)**

boundary, many of the arguments against the appeal in Appeal Decision APP/D1265/W/20/3254594 also apply to this site. In addition, the B+NP’s three constituent councils are opposed to this development and due weight should be given to this view. The Town Council details its response below:

Housing numbers

BFTC believes that the allocation exceeds the number agreed to through the B+NP. The 350 houses that are designated, and now being built, for the St Mary’s Hill site were included in the B+NP as part of the original allocation by North Dorset District Council. The Ward’s Drove allocation was not. The 150 houses planned will have a significant effect on the infrastructure of Blandford. If this site is completed, there will be very little green buffer between Blandford St Mary and Charlton Marshall. Moreover, the site would form an extension of the ribbon development along the A350 and increase the difficulty of communication back to the principal settlement (Blandford).

The B+NP, which has significant weight, cannot simply be ignored or overridden in this. The B+NP submission plan, Part 1 (page 9) Paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 clearly states the purpose of the NP as *‘being used to ‘determine planning applications in the area’ and to ‘shape the future’ of the area.’* To this end, B+ NP incorporated the growth figures from the ND local plan of 2016, for *‘at least’* 1,200 houses to be provided. This was also Dorset Council’s policy after reunification. The Ward’s Drove application exceeds this. Proposed changes to the NPPF will give more weight to the voice of local people, Neighbourhood Plans and local plans, apropos developments.

Access to goods and facilities

There are no facilities present anywhere near the proposed development and occupants would need to travel in order to meet the majority of their day-to-day needs. The nearest shop is approximately a km away and access to a wider range of goods and services would require a 2km journey into Blandford. We agree with the analysis of the inspector of Appeal Decision APP / D1265 / W / 20 / 3254594 that footpath links are unattractive for access purposes to Blandford or Charlton Marshall, to access goods and services, including schools and medical facilities and the bus services, (which are, in the inspector’s determination, infrequent and inadequate. This would lead to car journeys being essential to access the goods and services.

The inspector’s paragraphs 27 and 28 also apply – (modified in italics to reflect the Ward’s Drove application):

27. The ...village(s) (Blandford St Mary and Charlton Marshall) do not have day-to-day facilities (*and there are*) no strong functional relationship (to) overcome that deficiency. Paragraph 78 of the Framework (NPPF) also states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

28. However, the site’s location adjacent to (*two*) villages with only a very small number of facilities of (*their*) own, limits the potential for the proposed housing to carry any particular health, social benefits, or convenience for future occupants. Residents are therefore likely to be car dependant to meet their needs; a factor

128. **TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO PLANNING APPLICATION P/OUT/2021/00748 – LAND NORTH WARD’S DROVE, BLANDFORD ST MARY (CONT)**

which (*must*) weigh heavily against the scheme. In this regard the proposed development would have insufficient accessibility by sustainable modes to be considered a sustainable location for development.

Other infrastructure implications

Such development would also inevitably place great burden on the already strained primary school system in this area with little or no room to expand in the two existing Primary schools closest to the proposed development. Cumulatively, with the St Mary’s Hill development the remoteness of Ward’s Drove from the principal settlement, along with the other proposed developments will cause a sizeable increase in the amount of traffic driving back into Blandford to access the primary shopping centre, medical and dental facilities, and primary and secondary schooling. This would be unsustainable ribbon development of the worst possible kind.

Landscape and heritage

The following is taken from The North Dorset Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study: Stage 2 (October 2019) is used for reference for this site in Blandford St. Mary (BFTC comments in italics)

‘Although there are no designated cultural heritage features within the assessment area, the area contributes to the wider rural setting for the grade II listed buildings located in Lower Blandford St Mary.’ *There has been a significant erosion of this rural setting by the allocation of 350 Houses in the St Mary’s Hill development. Further development towards Ward’s Drove will almost eliminate the rural setting referred to.*

- ‘The area provides a rural setting to parts of the Blandford Forum, Blandford St Mary and Bryanston Conservation Area.’ *This will no longer be the case if the planning application succeeds.*
- ‘The area is largely undeveloped, with settlement limited’ *‘Further development would render this statement obsolete.*
- ‘The area is largely undeveloped, with settlement limited to several properties along Ward’s Drove.’ *Further development would render this statement obsolete.*
- ‘The area is separated from the adjacent existing settlement in Blandford St Mary by the A354.’
- ‘The assessment area provides a rural setting to existing settlement and contributes to the sense of separation between Blandford St Mary and Lower Blandford St Mary (*with a M-H sensitivity rating*). *The rural setting and sense of separation would no longer be the case if the planning application succeeds.*

For this, and the other reasons stated, it should be removed as a site for development.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

129. **TO MINUTE THE APPOINTMENT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER FOR BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES**

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

The Town Council confirms the appointment of Amanda Crocker as the Responsible Financial Officer and the former Responsible Financial Officer, Murray Sims is removed from the Town Council’s list of employees and signatories.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The meeting closed at 8:46 pm.

SIGNED

DATED