

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 6th July 2020 at 7:00pm Online using Microsoft Teams



PRESENT

Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman
Cllr P Clark
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr J Stayt
Cllr R Carter
Cllr C Jacques
Cllr A Cross

Cllr L Hitchings – Vice Chairman
Cllr H Mieville
Cllr H White
Cllr D Russell
Cllr P Osborne
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr C Stevens

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Operations Manager
Nicci Brown – Press

Assistant Town Clerk
Paul Rutter – Dorset Council
Two Members of the Public

17. PUBLIC SESSION

- 17.1 Blandford Leisure Centre – Paul Rutter, Dorset Council Service Manager for Leisure Services, Environment and Wellbeing, spoke about the Leisure Review, which was commissioned with Max Associates Expert Leisure Consultant, to initially look at the leisure contracts that were coming to an end. The contract with SLM has now been extended until the end of March 2022 for Blandford Forum. A condition survey showed that £25m over the next 25 years is required to maintain the existing buildings that the Dorset Council has. The final consultant report was considered, and recommendations made to the Scrutiny committee in March. The first recommendation was that it was considered that the leisure centres needed to be considered under the wider asset review, co-locating services, and therefore creating community hubs. The second recommendation was to extend the contracts until 2025. Recommendations were supported and a report was referred to cabinet for consideration. Due to the Covid-19 situation and leisure facilities being closed, it was decided by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Dorset Council to defer the report until leisure centres are open again and in pre-performance levels. The contractor, SLM, is operating its leisure centres very well. All the performance indicators are very strong, based on the number of users using the centre and what is provided. Positive feedback from users regarding their performance was also received. Max Associates provided forecast figures as to what the leisure contracts would cost the Dorset Council going forward. The figures for Blandford were very close as to what management figures are now, which means if the Dorset Council went out to procurement for a new management contract there would potentially not be any savings. Due to the law any additional costs during the closure will have to be borne by Dorset Council, i.e. contract management, maintenance, security. Due to the social distancing regulations it is going to be difficult for leisure facilities to operate in the same way as pre-closure. There is no additional funding available for this and the Dorset Council is lobbying the Local Government Association to seek additional funds.

Cllr B Quayle spoke about his concern that the Town Council funds the Leisure Centre, without the support from surrounding parishes when residents from the surrounding parishes use the facilities. He is therefore of the opinion that the parishes should also be making a financial contribution to Blandford Leisure Centre.

18. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLORS

Cllr Quayle gave the report this month.

18. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLORS (CONT.)

- 18.1 Thank You – Cllr Quayle thanked the Rangers and Highways for the work they have been doing. He particularly wanted to mention Graham Stanley, Senior Ranger for the northern area, for all his support to residents and Dorset Council Councillors.
- 18.2 Highways – Patch work took place in Shaftesbury Lane. The planned works in the Market Pace have been moved to later in the year, to coincide with the works in East Street. If there are any Highways issues, he asked to please report to both Dorset Council Councillors immediately so it can be dealt with.
- 18.3 Milldown Play Park – Due to a delay with the manufacturer the play park is now expected to be open in early September. The Dorset Council have provided 40% extra funding.
- 18.4 Resurfacing – The Rangers have resurfaced the Rotary Way on Stour Meadows; the surface should harden in the next few weeks.
- 18.5 Stour Meadow Bins – The new area manager for the DWP is looking at increasing the capacity.
- 18.6 Trees – The two trees next to the RBL had to be removed due to being infected. The Dorset Council Tree Officer is looking at another location in the town centre to replace them.
- 18.7 Nordon – Both Dorset Council Councillors have objected to the proposed plans.
- 18.8 Town Centre Slabs – The test patch is due to go ahead in Sheep Market Hill within the next four to five weeks. He is hoping that all Councillors and residents will provide their feedback.
- 18.9 Abandoned Houses – There are a number of abandoned houses in Blandford Forum, i.e. in The Plocks and around East Street. Both Dorset Council Councillors have taken this to the cabinet member for housing. Several meetings have been held with the owners and officers are actively working for these houses to go back on the market.
- 18.10 Facebook Page – The Dorset Council has a new Facebook page for businesses called *The natural place to do business*. Cllr Quayle asked for the Town Council to promote this page and this was shared on the Town Council's Facebook page during the meeting.
- 18.11 Tree Consultation – The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is currently running a consultation on the future of England's trees, which closes on the 11th September. Cllr Quayle asked for Councillors to respond to the consultation.
- 18.12 Art Competition – The Dorset Council is running a 'I live in Dorset' art competition for children and young people up to the age of 18, drawing picture on what they would like to see in Dorset in the future.

19. APOLOGIES

None

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

Cllr Quayle declared an interest in agenda item no. 9, regarding the railway arches. As a member of Blandford Railway Arches Trust he will take part in the discussions but will not vote.

21. TO RESPOND TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY PAUL RUTTER AND CONSIDER FIXTURE FUNDING OF THE BLANDFORD LEISURE CENTRE (THE CURRENT AGREEMENT FOR £50,000 A YEAR EXPIRES ON 31ST MARCH 2021)

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

The Town Council forms a Working Group to formulate a response, consisting of Cllrs Lindsay, S Hitchings, L Hitchings, Osborne, Carter, Lacey-Clarke, Quayle, White and Russell. The proposal will be presented to the Town Council meeting on 28th September 2020.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The Town Clerk confirmed that it is up to the Dorset Council to request support from surrounding parishes and that the Town Council is not in a position to ask for contributions on behalf of the responsible authority.

22. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8TH JUNE 2020

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

23. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

- 23.1 Meetings with the Dorset Council – Regular meetings have continued between town/parish councils and the Dorset Council every ten days on pandemic-related matters and weekly on town centre recovery. These have been incredibly useful.
- 23.2 Depot CCTV – A replacement camera and recorder have been ordered for the depot because the current one has been in place since the building was purchased and a recent service revealed that the night vision is no longer adequate. This has been purchased at £582.
- 23.3 Conference Equipment – The order has been placed and it is anticipated that the equipment should be with us at some point in August.
- 23.4 Cricket Club Agreement – A revised agreement was sent to the cricket club, with the addition of the loan and associated terms, and this has now been signed and returned.
- 23.5 Armed Forces Day – The flag was raised on Friday 26th June with the Garrison Sergeant Major, Terry Clarkson from the RBL and the Mayor in attendance with Geordie Thomson playing a fanfare. A fanfare was also recorded for the centenary of the Royal Corps of Signals, who were due to exercise the Freedom of the Town on Sunday 28th June 2020.
- 23.6 Proof of Life – There have been four requests for a ‘proof of life’ since lockdown started, and these have all been dealt with immediately.
- 23.7 Community Room – Two additional ports have been installed in the community room to assist with social distancing in the office and this will also be of use in the future for meetings held in the community room.
- 23.8 Skate Parks, Play Areas and Outdoor Gyms – Following the government announcement on 23rd June, these facilities will be reopened by staff on Saturday 4th July at 8am. This has taken a great deal of planning and consideration by the Town Clerk and Operations Manager since receipt of the relevant guidance on Friday 26th June. We have also offered to cover this for Persimmon play areas at Westbury Way and the outdoor gym at Stour Meadows, owned by Blandford St Mary parish council. Decision notices, posters and risk assessments have been carried out for all sites.

23. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (CONT.)

23.9 Public Art Update – The artist/designer has informed the ATC that the costs of the canopy has increased by £8,000 and he is therefore searching for other quotes. This has now been resolved, with slightly updated designs sent to Councillors w/e 3rd July 2020.

23.10 Staffing – The grounds and caretaking staff start to revert back to normal shifts on Monday 29th June 2020. This means the toilets and Woodhouse Gardens are now back to normal opening times. Office staff are now offering appointments in the office to the public during the months of July and August.

23.11 Community Rest Centres – Dorset Council (DC) is responsible for assisting displaced residents involved in an emergency situation. They have been looking for additional capacity in the DC area and asked if our venues could become community rest centres to assist with DC's community resilience. DC has asked about polling stations being used for this purpose however the Corn Exchange has been included due to its size and potential, along with Woodhouse Gardens and Larksmead pavilions and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed.

For information, the purpose of the rest centre is to:

- To provide an immediate place of safety for evacuees.
- To care for the health and wellbeing of evacuees during their time at the rest centre.
- To keep evacuees informed about the incident, the response to the incident and any longer-term alternative accommodation arrangements.

Some key points regarding the rest centre:

- The venue must have property insurance, which includes property owner's indemnity; this will cover the use of the venue for this purpose. Activities under the control and supervision of DC employees and DC employees whilst working are covered under the standard terms of DC's insurance policy. The venue can request a client information letter which will confirm DC's insurance cover in place.
- The venue is not required to open as a rest centre if doing so would prevent the venue from undertaking what it defines as its essential core business e.g. disruption to school classes.
- The venue may be required overnight or at weekends.
- Should a venue incur costs and/or loss of revenue as a direct result of operating as a rest centre, reasonable costs and loss of revenue for the operating period will be reimbursed by DC (unless agreed at the strategic level that another organisation will cover these costs).
- The venue management are not expected to provide any support or staff resource to the running of the rest centre for the emergency or to work directly with the people affected by the incident. The venue management may be asked to assist with the operation of any necessary services such as lighting, heating, water and sanitary installations.
- For the period of the emergency the Rest Centre will be staffed, coordinated and managed by DC staff.

23.12 Corn Exchange – The working group is meeting on 15th July, with Ingham Pinnock Associates, to discuss the route map they have provided the Town Council with. A recommendation to proceed with the project will then be an agenda item at the Planning meeting scheduled for 27th July to avoid any delay. All councillors are welcome to attend the working group meeting on 15th July.

23.13 Secretary of State

In discussion with the Chair and Vice Chair of F&S, and at the recommendation of the SLCC, the Town Clerk has written to the Secretary of State asking to withdraw rates for our venues and toilets.

23.14 Persimmon Homes

The Town Council's solicitor has advised that the form of transfer is now agreed, and they will confirm once they have the engrossment documents.

23. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (CONT.)

23.15 Hirer Survey

The Bookings Receptionist has distributed a survey to our regular hirers to find out what their intentions are over the next few weeks. We have had 13 responses so far and she is working through them in accordance with this guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities?utm_source=2b2520c6-5f06-42f3-b7f9-067c4b570a5a&utm_medium=
The Operations Manager is supporting the Bookings Receptionist with this to summarise what we can and cannot allow back at this stage.

23.16 Dorset Architectural Heritage Week

The DAHW Office has written to advise that it is 'very sad to announce that there will be no Dorset Architectural Heritage Week in 2020. We waited as long as we possibly could, but the decision has finally had to be made. We are truly crestfallen and so very sorry to have to add more disappointment onto what has now become a very tragic year. But please rest assured we will be back in 2021 and we look forward to working with you all again.' The ATC has carried out the actions to cancel these events in our schedule.

24. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

24.1 Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 15th June 2020

24.1.1 The minutes were RECEIVED.

24.2 Town & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 29th June 2020

24.2.1 Minute No. 6.3 Market Manager's Report

An AMENDMENT was PROPOSED by Cllr Stevens, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED unanimously that

The proposal includes that the delegated authority is valid until the end of the financial year to 31st March 2021.

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

Delegated authority is given to the Chairman of Council, the Chairman of the R & A committee, Town Clerk and Market Manager to reduce the rents for the stallholders to increase take-up and support the traders after they have suffered losses over the last three months. The delegated authority is valid until the end of the financial year to 31st March 2021.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

24.2.2 The minutes were RECEIVED.

25. TO CONSIDER A REPORT REGARDING THE RAILWAY ARCHES OPENING TIMES AND ARRANGEMENTS

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Carter, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 against, 1 non-vote) that

The Town Council instructs staff to manage the opening/closing of the Arches 9:00-2:30pm seven days a week, along with health & safety checks and maintenance and this will be reviewed every six months. The unsupervised opening is postponed until September, government guidance permitting, but BRAT is welcome to carry out supervised visits in the meantime. The Town Council approves expenditure authority for the purchase of signage,

25. **TO CONSIDER A REPORT REGARDING THE RAILWAY ARCHES OPENING TIMES AND ARRANGEMENTS (CONT.)**

using the Railway Arches budget line (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

26. **DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH & TOWN COUNCILS (DAPTC)**

26.1 To consider proposing motions for the DAPTC AGM

The paper was noted (see Appendix A) and no motions were proposed.

26.2 To consider responding to the DAPTC Constitution Review and Consultation

The paper was noted (see Appendix B) and it was agreed not to respond to the consultation.

27. **TO CONSIDER RESPONDING TO THE NEW MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT CONSULTATION**

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

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

The Town Council does not respond to the consultation.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

28. **TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND APPROVE THE HEADS OF TERMS FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE SKATEPARK LEASE WITH THE DORSET COUNCIL**

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

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

The Town Council approves the Heads of Terms and authorise the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council to sign the legal documents once finalised, subject to there not being any major amendments to the current Heads of Terms, in addition to expenditure authority for the solicitor's fees (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

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

29.1 Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – Blandford +

Cllr Carter reported that the Dorset Council has not decided on the Statement of Reason yet. The Steering Group will meet by the end of this month to discuss the Memorandum of Understanding further.

29.2 Working Group to formulate a response to the Aster Group planning application to develop a site in Salisbury Road

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

Cllr Carter updated Councillors with the findings from the Working Group meeting.

Cllrs Lacey-Clarke and S Hitchings requested a recorded vote.

29.2 Working Group to formulate a response to the Aster Group planning application to develop a site in Salisbury Road (Cont.)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that

The Town Council opposes the Reserved Matters Application and attaches a paper for consideration (slightly amended, at the meeting, from the proposed text sent with the agenda).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr L Lindsay – In favour
Cllr P Clark – In favour
Cllr S Hitchings – In favour
Cllr B Quayle – In favour
Cllr J Stayt – In favour
Cllr R Carter – In favour
Cllr C Jacques – In favour
Cllr A Cross – In favour

Cllr L Hitchings – In favour
Cllr H Mieville – In favour
Cllr H White – In favour
Cllr D Russell – In favour
Cllr P Osborne – In favour
Cllr R Holmes – In favour
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke – In favour
Cllr C Stevens – In favour

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Quayle and AGREED unanimously that

The Town Council sends the s106 agreement to the Town Council’s solicitor, along with text from a local resident, using budget line General Reserves (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

30. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

30.1 To appoint a representative for the Georgian Fayre

Cllr L Hitchings was appointed as the representative for the Georgian Fayre.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

30.2 To consider a proposed statement and resolution from the Town Council’s Diversity Representative, Cllr Mieville supported by Cllr Osborne

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

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

The Chairman of Council will send the following statement of reaffirmation to the Forum Focus:

Blandford Forum Town Council acknowledges the current strength of international public feeling towards inequalities and injustices that exist within society, and reaffirms its continued support for legislation - including the UK 2010 Equality Act - and better ways of working, that protect all people from direct, indirect and systemic discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

This statement reflects the strength of feeling amongst councillors that, as a public body, we would like to show our support for those who - in a legal manner - stand up for equality and justice for all, and who fight against the intolerance and discrimination faced by people of all kinds, both in this country and internationally.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

31. TO CONSIDER FORMING A WORKING GROUP TO:

- 31.1 Raise concerns over the (current and future) pharmaceutical provision in the town centre (raised at the Town & General Purposes committee meeting held on Monday 2th June 2020) with the delegated authority to send a letter on behalf of the Town Council

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

The Town Council gives delegated authority to the Working Group, consisting of Cllrs Lindsay, S Hitchings, Lacey-Clarke, Mieville, Holmes and Stayt, to finalise and send the letter(s) regarding the pharmaceutical provision in the town centre.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

- 31.2 Respond to the Wyatt Home outline proposals for the land north of the bypass

It was PROPOSED by Cllr S Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED (13 in favour, 3 against) that

The Town Council forms a Working Group, consisting of Cllrs Lindsay, Lacey-Clarke, Carter, S Hitchings, Jacques, Cross, White, Stevens, Stayt, Mieville and Quayle to respond to the consultation. The Working Group will report back to the Town Council meeting on 27th July 2020 with a recommendation.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and all her staff, but especially the Caretakers and grounds staff, for all their hard work during the last few months keeping the venues looking so pristine.

The meeting closed at 8:41pm.

SIGNED

DATED