

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee
held on Monday 18th September 2023 at 7:00pm held in the Corn Exchange



PRESENT

Cllr L Hitchings – Committee Chairman	Cllr H Mieville – Chairman of Council
Cllr R Holmes – Committee Vice Chairman	Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr L Lindsay – Chairman of R & A	Cllr A Cross
Cllr H White	

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk	Operations Manager
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16. PUBLIC SESSION

Cllr White asked about the introduction of bollards by One Stop.

Cllr Holmes asked about the chairs outside King’s Barbers in the Market Place.

Cllr Lindsay asked if the new Steak House ‘Jerry’s’ has permission for the tables and chairs, as some are blocking the pavement for pedestrians by the bus stop, which is particularly difficult to navigate at the moment due to scaffolding. Councillors asked the Town Clerk to find out if the sitting out licence has been approved and if the pavement area is wide enough.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr Mieville thanked the staff for organising another successful Expo on Saturday, which was well-attended.

17. APOLOGIES

Cllr K Herbert – Chairman of T&GP	Cllr N Lacey-Clarke – Vice Chair of Council
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18. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None

19. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12th June 2023

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (5 in favour, 2 abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

20. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The report was noted (see Appendix A).

Staff Meetings – A full staff meeting was held on 5th September 2023, with the Town Clerk updating employees on the work of the council, projects and events with a focus on the Corn Exchange. In addition, the Town Clerk is in the process of meeting with all office staff to discuss their roles, responsibilities, and workload. This is mainly due to the number of new staff employed over the last year.

Insights into Facebook Account – Staff who use our social media platforms received a training session with Breakthrough Communications on Friday 4th August 2023. The course leader advised referring to our Insights to see what engages people the most and encouraged using more content featuring real people.

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

External Auditor – To date, BDO Stoy has asked the Town Council for evidence of the confirmation of renewal with the Internal Auditor and terms of their appointment, October minutes confirming acknowledgement of the last external auditor's report and some bank statements.

Letters to Grounds & Caretaking Staff – The R&A Chairman asked the Town Clerk to thank the staff for their hard work in making our areas so presentable, which was supported by the Committee. A letter has therefore been sent to all the staff involved.

Public Sector Deposit Fund – The RFO has completed a form to apply for The Public Sector Deposit Fund, which is a CCLA investment account. Cllrs S Hitchings and Lacey-Clarke have been asked to be signatories to the account. The interest rate was 4.5348% as at 20th June 2023, and more information on the Fund can be found here:

<https://www.ccla.co.uk/funds/public-sector-deposit-fund>

Staff Pay – The Local Government Pay Claim 2023/24 is still awaited. Staff and Councillors will be informed once this comes into effect.

Public Health Dorset – The Blandford Group Practice has asked about the closure of the Corn Exchange next year and Public Health Dorset has asked if we can support a project the surgery is focusing on, which is tackling male obesity, using funds previously allocated to the orienteering project. It was agreed that the surgery is invited to complete a grant form and the item is added to the next full council agenda.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

21. **ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

21.1 Administration Budget for the year to 31st August 2023

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

21.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 31st August 2023

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

21.3 Reserves Accounts as at 31st July 2023

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

22. **REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION**

22.1 To receive and retrospectively approve cheque payment 011137 – 011138 (Sheet 879 – 880) totalling £294.64 (for petty cash)

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

The cheque payments 011137 – 011138 (Sheet 879 – 880) totalling £294.64 (for petty cash) are received and retrospectively approved.

22.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2023 to 31st August 2023 (sheets 208-211) totalling £135,611.94

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

The direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2023 to 31st August 2023 (sheets 208-11) totalling £135,611.94 are received and retrospectively approved.

22. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION (cont)

22.3 To receive and retrospectively approve Online Faster Payments FP150 to FP164 totalling £182,987.22

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes, and unanimously that
The Online Faster Payments FP150 to FP164 totalling £182,987.22 are received and retrospectively approved.

22.4 Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 1st June 2023 to 31st July 2023

The Chairman advised that the investments noted are not new investments.

22.5 Report by Chairman on Petty Cash checks

The paper was noted (see Appendix E) and the Chairman, Cllr L Hitchings was able to confirm the petty cash check, which balances to the penny.

22.6 Bank Reconciliation to 31st August 2023

The paper was noted (see Appendix F) and Cllr L Hitchings also confirmed that the monthly bank reconciliation had been undertaken during the period and was in order.

23. TO REVIEW THE FREE VENUE HIRE POLICY/CRITERIA

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

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

The free venue hire policy is amended to include the following:

- 1. The £300 is per year (financial or annual) and anything over this amount will be taken to an appropriate meeting for approval.**
- 2. There is an appeal process for unsuccessful applications, with the application being referred to the Finance & Staffing Committee.**

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

24. TO CONSIDER FEEDBACK FROM THE WORKING GROUP REGARDING A REQUEST FROM THE BLANDFORD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR A SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

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

The following information is requested from the Youth & Community Centre:

- Detailed usage figures**
- Up to date accounts to the end of June 2023**
- What is the minimum amount of funding required to keep the Youth & Community Centre running**

Subject to receipt of information, a new Service Level Agreement up to 31st March 2025 will then considered at the October Town Council meeting.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

25. **TO REVIEW THE FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE REMIT AND THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED unanimously that a **Recommendation is made to full council that**

No amendments are made to the Finance & Staffing Committee Remit and Financial Regulations at this time.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCIL

26. **CONFIDENTIAL**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Mieville, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes 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.

26.1 Town Clerk's Report

Nothing to report.

26.2 To note the Town Clerk's appraisal (in accordance with standing orders), carried out on 24th May 2023 with Cllr L Hitchings and Cllr C Stevens

Cllrs L Hitchings confirmed that the Town Clerk's appraisal was carried out on 24th May 2023 by himself and Cllr Stevens.

The Meeting closed at 8:30pm.

SIGNED:

DATED: