

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 18th December 2023 at 7:02pm in the Corn Exchange



PRESENT

Cllr H Miéville – Chairman of Council	Cllr N Lacey-Clarke – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr B Quayle	Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr R Holmes	Cllr L Hitchings
Cllr P Clark	Cllr H White
Cllr L Lindsay	Cllr P Osborne
Cllr S Chapman	Cllr C Stevens
Cllr A Cross	Cllr C Jacques

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Operations Manager	Responsible Financial Officer
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130. PUBLIC SESSION

Cllr Holmes

130.1 REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Cllr Quayle updated Councillors on the following matters:

Dorset Council has entered into a multi-authority conversation with other local authorities regarding funding for the Wessex area.

The Highways team has won an international award for green initiatives, which is part of their zero carbon targets.

Cllr Quayle put forward a motion to Dorset Council backing Dorset farmers, which was supported.

Waste collection dates have been published for the festive period.

Grants are available for local groups/organisations/businesses to apply for.

Dorset Council has passed a housing strategy and the Cabinet member for housing is keen to receive feedback.

Potholes are very common during colder weather, so Cllr Quayle encouraged members to report them at their earliest convenience.

130.2 CIVIC REPORT

Cllr Miéville noted the report distributed earlier today (see Appendix B) and said he has enjoyed a busy month.

131. APOLOGIES

Cllr K Herbert	Cllr R Carter
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132. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (12 in favour, 2 abstentions) 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.

133. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27th NOVEMBER 2023

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (12 in favour, 2 abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

134. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

Civic Carol Service – The office has received very positive feedback for the organisation of the civic carol service.

Martyn's Law – The Town Clerk and Operations Manager will be attending a webinar organised by the DAPTC on 30th January 2024 at 4:00pm with Dorset Council's Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The webinar will cover the role of the SAG and how to engage, an overview of key events in 2024 including D-Day activities. The final piece of content is Dorset Council's watching brief on Martyn's Law.

Corn Exchange Tender – Three of the four tenderers confirmed that they would appreciate a further week (one was ready to submit on time) so, following discussion with the Town Clerk and the consultants, the Quantity Surveyor has therefore issued a note to all tenderers to confirm a week's extension to 15th December 2023.

Mayoral Scroll – At the meeting held on 31st July 2023 Councillors agreed that the first 130 years of the Mayoral Scroll is to be separated from the most recent 50 years – creating two scrolls – one representing the Borough Council and one for the Town Council.

Councillors would like to be in a position where both scrolls are displayed at the annual Mayor Making ceremony, at the start of each council term, so the Mayoral Scrolls can be inspected. Therefore, a decision on the storage location was deferred until after a visit to the Dorset History Centre and Blandford Town Museum, or Councillors may choose to store both scrolls in the existing Town Council fire safe. The Mayor's Assistant has raised the matter with the Dorset History Centre and had asked if a wooden storage box for the old part of the scroll would be appropriate. The Dorset History Centre advised to avoid use of wood for the following reasons:

- Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions from either the wood and/or coatings
- Residual formaldehyde (a VOC) in MDF
- Vulnerability to insect attack

They therefore recommended conservation grade storage boxes. The Mayor's Assistant found a suitable box for the two separate scrolls to fit in at just £7 each and they are [viewable here](#). The archivists also recommended rolling the scrolls in Tyvek fabric, bought by the metre and [viewable here](#). These boxes and fabric have therefore been ordered for both scrolls, with a total cost of £39.68 which has been charged to the Civic Budget. Now that the Town Council is able to appropriately store the two scrolls, it is therefore recommended that both scrolls continue to be stored within the fire safe. In addition, it is recommended that a handcrafted, ornate wooden box is made to accommodate the older scroll and a quote has been sought. This can then be used for presenting the Borough scroll at Mayor Making ceremonies, or other events, with the protective box sitting within it.

134. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (cont.)

Review of the Railway Arches – When the arches were opened to the public the opening hours were set for 9am – 2:30pm seven days a week. This was initially for a trial period and was to be reviewed after six months and then annually. The Arches have been opened at 9am by caretakers and closed at 2:30pm by the grounds staff, at weekends they have been opened and closed by the on-duty caretaker. This has worked well because by closing at 2:30pm the grounds staff have been able to close the gates before they finish work at 3:30pm. This has allowed the caretaker to concentrate on hirings and other duties without having to walk down to the arches. There has continued to have been an increase of broken glass and litter under the arches, but it is hard to say if this increase is due to the arches being open and more of a focal point now. There have been incidents of youths being on top of the arches outside of the opening hours, but this was to be expected and is hard to control without a significant increase in the height of the fencing.

A structural report was carried out in September 2023, what follows is a summary of main points, and a contractor who can carry out the work is being sought, as it is somewhat specialist, and then a quote will be bought back to Council:

1. During the monitoring period of three years there has been minor erosion to mortar joints and limited increase in the size of the cracks.
2. Annual monitoring recommended to assess possible further movement.
3. Any larger cracks are repaired with stainless steel helibars bedded in mortar joints with epoxy bonding agent.
4. It is recommended the river wall is protected with sandbags or a bund below river level or rebuild the section of brick foundations below water level.
5. It would be cost effective to expediate the laying of sandbags by an approved contractor.
6. Subject to the flow of the river when the water will be at its lowest level, we can assess the length and height of the sandbags. The limited large cracks that are suitable for repair can also be done.

Parliament Visit – The tour of the Palace of Westminster has been arranged for 13th March 2024 and Simon Hoare MP will meet cllrs/staff afterwards.

Corn Exchange Tender Process – Four tenders have been submitted for the Corn Exchange works. A meeting was held with the consultants this morning and the figure is now known for the Public Works Loan Board application.

Jerry's – A response has not yet been received to the email sent last Monday evening to Dorset Council querying the space on the footpath outside the restaurant.

135. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

135.1 Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting dated 11th December 2023

135.1.1 Recommendations

Minute No. 36.1 – To receive a report regarding the Town Council's salaries budget and current workload and to consider requests for the 2024-2025 budget

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke and AGREED (13 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The recommendations in the report are approved, however SCP5 will replace SCP4 as the starting rate for the Grounds & Caretaking role.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

135. **RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES (cont.)**

Minute No. 37.3 – Consideration of the overall budget for the year 2023/24 and recommendation of the precept for 2024/25

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (6 in favour, 1 abstention) that a RECOMMENDATION is made to full council that the draft budget is considered for the 2024/2025 financial year, with investigations into potential savings, however the precept will be finalised at the Town Council meeting scheduled for Monday 18th December 2023.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (12 in favour, 2 against) that

The Town Council approves the budget and confirms the precept for 2024/205 at £880,115 (an increase for a Band D property of £14.22 across the year, which equates to 6.12%).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

135.1.2 To Receive the Minutes

The Minutes were RECEIVED.

8:13pm – Cllr Lindsay left the meeting.

136. **TO APPROVE THE COUNCIL DIARY FOR 2024/25**

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Chapman and AGREED (10 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstention, 1 non-vote) that

Councillors select the third option for the April dates (holding meetings on 8th, 15th and 22nd April 2024) and approves the council diary for 2024/25.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

8:15pm – Cllr Lindsay returned to the meeting.

137. **CORN EXCHANGE**

137.1 To authorise the forming of a charitable trust for the Town Hall/Corn Exchange

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED (7 in favour, 4 against and 3 abstentions) that

The Town Council retrospectively approves the expenditure of (up to) £1,995 + VAT for the advice note provided by the specialist charity lawyer (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8). However, the Town Council resolves not to pursue the option of establishing a charity at this time.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

137.2 To authorise the signing of two documents for the Community Ownership Fund

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

137. CORN EXCHANGE (cont.)

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

The Town Clerk is authorised to sign the documents on behalf of the Town Council, subject to the venue being listed as one hereditament for both the Town Hall and the Corn Exchange.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

138. TO CONSIDER RENEWING THE FOUR-YEAR SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT WITH MVS BLANDFORD

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Osborne and SECONDED by Cllr Holmes that the Town Council does not proceed with the sponsorship agreement with MVS Blandford Ltd. Cllr Osborne then withdrew his proposal and it was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Osborne and AGREED (10 in favour, 1 against, 3 abstention) that

The Town Council proceeds with the sponsorship agreement with MVS Blandford Ltd.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

This will be reviewed in a year's time.

139. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL PLAN (DISTRIBUTED SEPARATELY)

The paper was noted (see Appendix G) and Cllr L Hitchings thanked the Operations Manager for his report.

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

140.1 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group – Blandford +

140.1.1 To consider reaffirming the Town Council's decision on the Ward's Drove planning application

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Quayle and AGREED (13 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council reaffirms its objections to the P/OUT/2021/00748 planning application from 2021 and submits the notes on the Design Code provided by the Blandford+ Neighbourhood Plan monitoring group.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

140.2 BFTC Commemoration Group

140.2.1 To consider the proposed schedule of events for D-Day 80 in June 2024

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Lindsay and AGREED (13 in favour, 1 abstention) that

140. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND CONSIDER ANY REQUESTS FROM THE: (cont)

The Town Council approves the proposed events for D-Day 80, working in partnership with the Chairman of the Blandford & District Branch of the Royal British Legion, and authorises expenditure of up to £800 from the Civic Budget line 4082 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localist Act 2011 s1-8). It was noted that staff time is limited due to the Corn Exchange project at the time of the events.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

140.3 Climate Change and Biodiversity

A meeting has been arranged for 11th January 2024.

140.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project

The Project Manager at Dorset Council has responded to the Town Clerk to say he sees this as the 'stage 1 feasibility', with Dorset Highways giving us a basic plan. He explained that the reason they have placed the draft area in the position shown is that it is desirable to not have live traffic on two sides of a pedestrian area. By placing the area alongside the already paved area and attaching it to the current coned-off area in front of the Corn Exchange gives a maximum area and leaves some short-term parking. Another issue, if the parking bays were split, is that another parking pay machine may be needed and that is an extra cost to parking services, who then may not agree with that proposal. He said that when we start this trial is up to both the town council and highways and we should not pressure ourselves until we are all happy to start, and after the refurbishment has been completed may be the perfect time to start the trial pedestrian area. He also advised that funding for this project is very limited and time related (use by April 2024) but other funding maybe found from LTP. He has asked for a list of questions at this stage relating to Costs, Plans, Legal, Planning and what activity the town council wishes to place in the area either temporary, non-fixed units or fixed. He will then be in a position to set up some meetings in the New Year.

9:05pm – Cllr Quayle left the meeting.

The Town Clerk will set up a working group for the market area to discuss the possibility of progressing the scheme before April 2024.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

141. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr Chapman reported that the Blandford Repair Café has pledged to support the plastic free community.

142. CONFIDENTIAL

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Osborne, SECONDED by Cllr L Hitchings 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.

142.1 To approve the updated Heads of Terms for the land north of the bypass

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

142. **CONFIDENTIAL (cont.)**

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

The matter is deferred until the advice note is received and Councillors reaffirmed their stance that the Town Council is not able to adopt the highway.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The meeting closed at 9:22pm.

SIGNED

DATED