



# BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

## INFORMATION PACK FOR PROSPECTIVE TOWN COUNCILLORS

**Local Elections**

**May 2024**

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



Town Clerk's Office  
Church Lane, Blandford Forum  
Dorset DT11 7AD



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD

Proudly supporting those who serve.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Town Council comprises 16 Councillors who were elected for a 5-year term on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 (to align with the new Dorset Council).

Councillors who are elected at a subsequent by-election or are co-opted to fill a casual vacancy during the course of the 5-year term will hold office until the end of the 5-year term.

The roles of Mayor/Chairman and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman of Council are filled by one Councillor and are elected from the 16 Councillors at the Annual Council Meeting in May each year.

A copy of the Town Council's [Standing Orders](#), [Financial Regulations](#) and general guidance notes, etc. will be supplied to all Councillors at the commencement of their term of office.

A copy of the Code of Conduct for Town Councillors is available from our [website](#).

The following information appears on the Council's website <https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk/town-council> and gives more detailed information on how the Council operates.

If a prospective Councillor has any queries or would like further information, please contact the Town Clerk's Office on 01258 454500 between 9:30am and 12:30pm Monday to Friday.

## **THE TOWN COUNCIL – AN OVERVIEW**

Blandford Forum Town Council is the parish authority for the town of Blandford Forum and has an estimated population of 11,013, is 409 hectares in area and has approximately 5,058 dwellings (2017 census).

It is the third tier of government after Parliament and Dorset Council (formed in April 2019) and its legal powers are granted to it and regulated by various government acts. Blandford Forum Town Council is the first council in Dorset to be awarded with Quality Gold Council Status.

The Town Council supplements the provision of local government services in Blandford Forum and provides a range of social and recreational facilities, while promoting and representing the town with other national and statutory bodies. For example, the Town Council acts as a consultee and lobbying force with the Dorset Council and regional and national government putting forward the wishes and needs of the local community. The Dorset Council, which covers the whole of the county except Bournemouth and Poole and whose main responsibilities include education, social services, highways, strategic planning, libraries, development control, environmental health, refuse collection, economic development, tourism and major recreational facilities such as the Blandford Leisure Centre consults with the Town Council on such subjects as the County Structure Plan, the Local Transport Plan, the Mineral and Waste Local Plan, the Local Plan, planning applications within Blandford Forum and the economic development strategy.

The Dorset (Electoral Changes) Order 2016 created the following five wards in Blandford Forum: Blandford Badbury Heights (One Councillor), Blandford Central (Six Councillors), Blandford Hilltop (Two Councillors), Blandford Langton St Leonards (Four Councillors) and Blandford Old Town Ward (Three Councillors). A map showing the area of each ward is available from this link <https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk/town-council>.

The Civic Year runs from May to April with the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council, from the 16 Councillors at the Annual Council Meeting in May each year. These roles and those of the Chairmen of Committees are filled by Councillors who have been nominated and voted for by their Councillor colleagues. Town

Councillors are voluntary although they can choose to receive the allowance that is now available to them to cover Council-related costs such as stationery, telephone bills, travel, etc.

## **MEETINGS & COMMITTEES**

The Council operates on a committee system according to the remits of the Committees and where necessary the Committees make recommendations to full Council. The Town Council (Corn Exchange), Recreation & Amenities Committee (R&A) and the Town & General Purposes Committee (T&GP) occur four to five times a year, whereas the Town Council and the Town Council Planning Committee are on a 4-weekly cycle. In addition, there is a Finance & Staffing Committee which meets on a quarterly basis. Councillors can express a preference for a particular Committee but are voted onto Committees at the Annual Council Meeting along with the election of the Chairmen of Committees. Vice-Chairmen are elected at the first Committee meeting in the new civic year.

Subject matters are brought before Committees and Council by means of the Agenda which is issued a minimum of three clear working days before a meeting and is posted on the various public notice boards around the town and on the website. The agendas are set a week before each meeting by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council or Committees in liaison with the Town Clerk. At full Council meetings the Committees' minutes are received and any Committee resolutions involving major changes to Council policies are voted upon.

The press and public are welcome to attend all Council meetings and the public may put questions or make statements on any matter in the public period at the commencement of each meeting.

The minimum commitment expected of Councillors is that they will attend full Town Council, Town Council (Corn Exchange) and Planning meetings together with either R&A or T&GP Committees. There are no meetings held during August and Councillors with holiday commitments at other times are asked to notify the Town Clerk.

Meetings usually take place on a Monday evening at 7:00pm in the Corn Exchange, Market Place where there is access for the disabled. Town Councillors receive their agendas and papers electronically unless a paper copy is requested.

## **HOW DO COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS OPERATE?**

The following items appear on all agendas and in addition each Town Council/Committee agenda will detail the specific business relevant to that Committee.

Public Session (15 minutes)

Apologies

To receive any Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

Approval of minutes from the last meeting

Town Clerk's Report & Correspondence

Confidential

The Town Council agenda also covers recommendations from the Committees, reports from the Dorset Council Councillors and representatives to Community and Local Organisations plus any other Council business not covered by the Committees.

The Remit of each Committee can be found on our website, under each relevant meeting <https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk/town-council/meetingscommittees>.

Although agendas are set by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council or the Committees in liaison with the Town Clerk, any Councillor can request any item to be put on the agenda providing it is relevant to the Council. This can be done informally either through the Town Clerk or Chairman or formally by means of a motion. Each agenda item is discussed and voted upon by the Councillors.

The Minutes, which are not a verbatim account of the meeting, detail the decisions reached and are a record of the voting. The Minutes are usually available four working days following the meeting and are forwarded to Councillors and local media organisations by email and are also available to members of the public via the Town Council's website, from the Town Clerk's office or the library.

Once a decision has been passed by Council and a course of action identified, the work is organised and carried out by the Council's staff under the control of the Town Clerk.

## **REPRESENTATION TO COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Blandford Forum Town Council appoints Councillors to act as representatives to organisations and groups within the town (see [Appendix A](#) for a list). Councillors' involvement as representatives in the local community develops the Council's greater understanding of the role of these organisations and groups. Representatives are nominated either at the request of a particular organisation/group or, if core funding has been granted, at the request of the Town Council.

The term of office for representatives is normally for a period of one year commencing from the Annual Council Meeting in May. Town Council representatives are expected to regularly attend meetings of the organisation they represent and take an active part in its operations. Annual reports are submitted by each representative to the Annual Council Meeting in May.

## **WORKING GROUPS**

Membership of Working Groups is also voted on at the Annual Council Meeting or at the Council/Committee Meetings as appropriate. In addition, a number of Working Groups meet as and when required to discuss particular issues and report back to full Council or Committees as appropriate.

## **CIVIC EVENTS**

Councillors are expected to attend various civic occasions throughout the civic year ranging from the Mayor Making Ceremony (usually held on a Friday morning in May) to the Remembrance Day parade and civic church services. Councillors wear civic robes supplied by the Council at such civic events.

## **NOTICE BOARD LOCATIONS**

Town Clerk's Office, Church Lane  
The Corn Exchange  
Heddington Drive amenity area  
Holland Way (opposite Stanton Close)  
Salisbury Road (next to the bus stop)  
Hunt Road  
Langton Road  
Balmer Road play area

Old Town Ward  
Old Town Ward  
Blandford Central Ward  
Blandford Central Ward  
Hilltop Ward  
Hilltop Ward  
Langton St Leonards Ward  
Badbury Heights

There are also two community notice boards on the Tabernacle toilet building.

## **TOWN COUNCIL STAFF**

The Town Council's executive officer is the Town Clerk who leads a team of 9 full-time and 6 part-time staff plus the honorary roles of Mace Bearer and Town Crier. The organisational structure can be viewed at [Appendix C](#).

The Operations Manager leads a team of 4 groundsmen and 3 caretakers/grounds assistants and the office staff provide the financial, administrative, Committee and full Council support services plus the public reception, venues booking service and the administrative support for the mayoral role and civic events.

## **HOW IS THE TOWN COUNCIL FUNDED?**

The Council Tax paid by Blandford Forum households includes the spending requirements of the Dorset Council, Dorset Police, Dorset Fire Service and Blandford Forum Town Council. The Dorset Council is responsible for collecting the Council Tax. Many people do not realise that the Town Council does not receive any revenue support from central government, unlike the Dorset Council, neither does it receive any funding from local businesses and retailers via their payment of the non-domestic rate.

Each year the Town Council calculates the money it needs to raise to provide its services. Then we deduct income which we expect to receive from fees and charges such as the hire of sports facilities, lettings of the various halls, etc, to leave the amount we require to spend on the services and any capital projects which are planned for the year ahead. This sum, called the precept, is the amount we levy on the Dorset Council and which is collected by them as a proportion of the total Council Tax paid by Blandford's households.

The Town Council's precept for the financial year 2023-2024 was set at £825,250 which equates to £232.23 for a Band D equivalent property.

## **WHAT DOES A TOWN COUNCILLOR DO?**

Most people's impression of what a councillor does is that they just attend council meetings, and nothing could be further from the truth. The duties and pleasure, of being a local councillor are many and varied, however it is the ordinary day to day contact with local people in their own community that is the most important part of being a councillor.

A Parish or Town Councillor signs a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thereby undertakes to observe an ethical Code of Conduct when dealing with matters on behalf of the community.

**Listening:** One of the most important tasks of a Parish or Town Councillor is listening to and understanding the views of people in their community. Many public bodies or organisations acknowledge this is the hardest information for them to capture and they in turn use the skills and local knowledge of the parish or town council for advice to assist and inform their services.

**Meetings:** A councillor agrees to attend all meetings (reasonably possible) that he or she is summoned to. In a smaller council this may only require one meeting of full council a month (there are however a few small councils that still only meet once every two months). In medium and larger councils however, along with full council meetings, there are further committee meetings or working groups. Most meetings are held in the evening but some committees and working groups may be during the day.

Blandford Forum Town Council's committees include Planning, Finance & Staffing, Town & General Purposes and Recreation & Amenities. Where committees are used however the council usually consists of a larger number of councillors and therefore each councillor is only expected to serve on one or two committees.

**Representation:** Parish councils also need representation at other local government meetings or on local bodies/organisations and councillors may be asked to serve on certain groups or attend functions on behalf of the parish council. Councillors act as ambassadors for their community keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns and reporting back on County and regional changes.

Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of and considerate to, specific minority needs.

**Ceremonial Duties:** In some larger councils there will be times when councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duty to the community. This may entail Remembrance Parades, civic dinners or attendance at public functions to name but a few.

**Extra skills:** Through all of these functions councillors will draw on their own skills and experiences and it is the sharing of these skills that makes a strong team. Parish and Town councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects and endeavour to solve them locally themselves. Councillors working as a team will need to deal with employment issues, budgeting, asset management, staff management, project management or grant funding and probably lots more if they are creative and involved. All councils must be aware and owe a duty to their community to manage staff considerately, whether it is employing one parish clerk or a whole host of office and grounds maintenance staff.

Accounts must be kept and whilst the clerk (or Responsible Financial Officer) will be employed to carry out this duty, councillors together as a team are responsible for the financial decisions made and implemented. A clerk is employed to advise and seek advice on behalf of councillors to assist them in their decisions. Councillors are there to consider the information gathered and make a group decision on all matters. No individual councillor is responsible for any single decision. This is democracy at its best.

**Training and support:** Training is available to any council, large or small. Legislation allows for councils to pay for training and ongoing training for councillors is sound business management. The Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils website [www.dorset-aptc.gov.uk](http://www.dorset-aptc.gov.uk) provides details of professional training programmes designed specifically for councillors.

**Responsibility:** All councillors are expected to abide by Blandford Forum Town Council's Code of Conduct pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011. This document is available to download free of charge from our [website](#). The responsibilities detailed in the code of conduct are designed to protect councillors as well as the people they serve and give clear guidance so that councillors may undertake their duties with confidence.

**Prospective councillors may also be interested in the following links for further information:**

- Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils Elections Page <https://www.dorset-aptc.gov.uk/news/elections-2024>
- National Association of Local Councils [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)
- Dorset Council <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/>



## Applying to become a councillor?

Even those who have stood as councillors before may forget what the process was like in the past. Whilst relatively easy it is strict and if not followed exactly, will result in disappointment and rejection for the wrong reasons. The rules are there to ensure that only those who are eligible to stand for election in your community are considered and that those put forward have agreed to stand for election.

Councillors are elected by the public and serve a five-year term in office (it will revert to four years in 2024); these were unpaid positions until 2004 when allowance schemes were introduced to encourage more people to stand for election. Allowances, which tend not be very large, are at the discretion of the individual councils and most still choose to maintain an unpaid status.

### If you wish to stand as a councillor, you must satisfy these requirements:

- 18 or over on the day of nomination.
- **And** a UK, Commonwealth or EU citizen

You must also be:

- A registered voter in the electoral area
- **Or** have lived in the district/borough for 12 months prior to nomination.
- **Or** have worked in the district/borough for 12 months prior to nomination.
- **Or** own a property in the district/borough for 12 months prior to nomination.

It is not necessary for you to live in the ward that you wish to seek election for.

### You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are bankrupt and an Order or Interim Restriction Order has been imposed.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine.
- Work for the council where you are intending to stand for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).

### The Election Procedure:

Ordinary elections of local councillors take place on the first Thursday in every May every four years. The next election is scheduled for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

### A few terms that you will encounter explained:

- **Returning Officer** – person empowered to run an election.
- **Standing** – putting your name forward for election.
- **Electoral Register** – names and addresses, together with election identification numbers of all people within a community who are registered to vote.
- **Election Timetable** – dates when specific forms must be publicised or submitted.
- **Warded** – Areas are split up into what is called 'wards' so that councillors are elected by a specific smaller number of people and will be aware of their local concerns rather than having to represent all people in a whole parish.
- **Expenses** – If you do produce your own leaflets/pamphlets you need to declare how much you have spent on this.



## 1. Publication of the Notice of Election

The Chief Executive of the Dorset Council is the Returning Officer and therefore has the power to call an election. Notice of Election will be given by the Dorset Council. Please check [their website](#) for updates.

## 2. The Nomination Timetable

- Nomination forms and information will be made available online from **mid-February 2024**
- Notice of election will be published on **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**
- Nominations can be received from **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024**
- Must be delivered by hand
- By appointment – in a variety of locations (Dorchester, Weymouth, Wimborne, Blandford, Wareham) – times and dates to be advised by the elections team in due course.
- Deadline for receipt of nominations by Returning Officer – **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 (4pm)**
- The **5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 4pm** is also deadline for withdrawal of nomination

## 3. Getting the nomination forms

Nomination forms will be available to download from the [Dorset Council website](#). Anyone who is eligible to stand can request these forms.

## 4. Completing the nomination forms

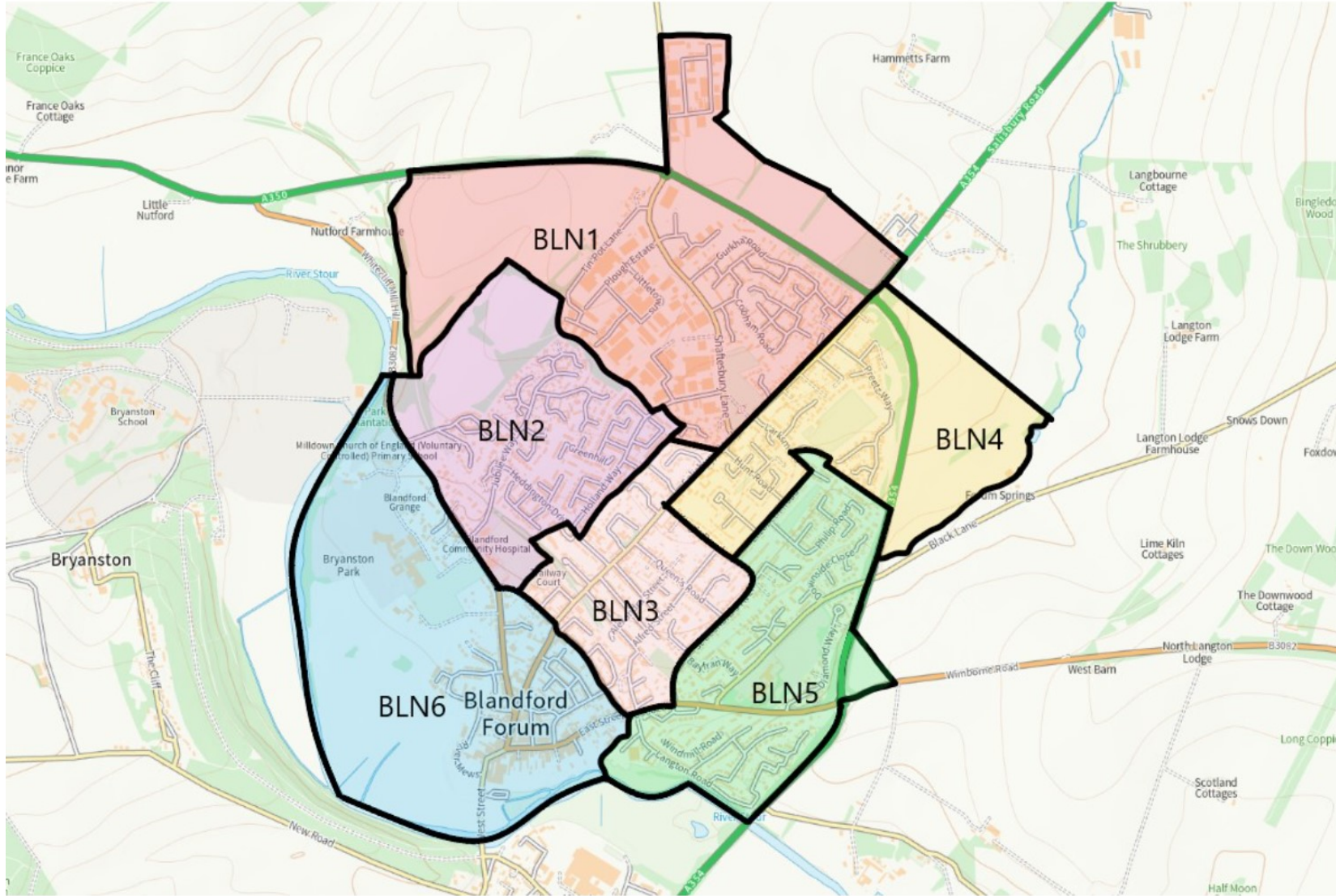
You will need to fill in all your personal details and those of the people nominating you. You and those nominating will be asked to fill in your Electoral Register number. This is the district code on the front of the Electoral Register i.e. A Village might be 'SX' then this is followed by the number that appears next to your name, or next to the name of the person nominating you. The entry in this box will there read something like 'SX 413'. You must get your form completed and signed by those nominating you and it will help to copy the numbers of those nominating you when you obtain your own Electoral Register number. To stand as a councillor, your nomination paper must be signed by a proposer, seconder and these people must be registered voters in the ward you wish to stand for.

## 5. Returning nomination forms

It is imperative that you submit your forms in accordance with the election timetable (above) and can ONLY be delivered by hand and by appointment. Failure to do so will render your application null and void.

### Checklist:

- Do not forget to get **everyone** mentioned to sign the forms
- Ensure that all addresses are in **full** with no abbreviations
- Include the whole Electoral Register reference **letters and numbers**
- **Be careful not to miss important dates**



**REPRESENTATIVES TO COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND TOWN  
COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS 2023-24**

<b><u>ORGANISATION</u></b>	<b><u>REPRESENTATIVE 2023/24</u></b>
BFTC Commemoration Group	Clr Stevens Clr Cross Clr Carter
Age Concern	Clr Herbert
Allotment Society	Clr Lindsay Clr Mieville
Ancient Monuments Officer	Clr Clark
Blandford + Neighbourhood Plan	Clr Carter Clr Cross Clr Holmes
Blandford Area Youth Management Committee	Clr Lacey-Clarke Clr Jacques Vacancy
Blandford Fashion Museum	Clr Holmes Clr Stevens
Blandford Food Bank	Clr S Hitchings
Blandford Forum Charities (4 Cllrs) (Five-year term)	Clr Quayle Clr Carter Clr Clark Clr Holmes
Blandford Leisure Centre Consultative Group	Clr Herbert Clr Carter
Blandford Literary Festival	Clr Mieville
Blandford Opportunity Group	Clr L Hitchings
Blandford Public Transport Group Parish Transport Representative	Clr S Hitchings
Blandford Yuletide Festival	Clr L Hitchings Clr Stevens Clr Clark
Blandford Business Group	Clr Herbert (Chair of T&GP) Clr Stevens Clr Cross
Citizens Advice Dorset	Clr Osborne
Civic Society Group of the Blandford Museum Arts & Heritage Trust	Clr Quayle Clr Cross
Clean Up Blandford Campaign	Clr Stevens Clr Cross Clr Mieville
Cycling Officer	Clr L Hitchings
Diversity Representative	Clr Mieville Clr Lacey-Clarke

Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils (DAPTC) Larger Councils and North Dorset	Cllr White Cllr Stevens
Flood Warden	Cllr Clark
Foundation Governors Blandford Secondary School Foundation	Cllr Carter Cllr Mieville Cllr Lacey-Clarke (Deputy)
Free Expression	Cllr Mieville
Garrison/Police/Council Joint Partnership Group	Cllr S Hitchings Cllr Lacey-Clarke
Georgian Fayre	Cllr Stevens Cllr L Hitchings
Mortain & Blandford Twinning Association	Cllr Cross Cllr Carter
Preetz Twinning Association	Cllr Carter
Remembrance Sunday Planning Group (5-year term)	Cllr Lindsay Cllr Holmes Cllr Carter Cllr Chapman
TIC Observer	Cllr Osborne
TREADS	Cllr Mieville
Tree Warden	Cllr Clark
William Williams Charity Representative	Cllr White

# Organisational Structure



## BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

