

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 29th January 2024 at 7:00pm in the Corn Exchange

DRAFT
Subject to confirmation

PRESENT

Cllr H Miéville – Chairman of Council
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr P Clark
Cllr L Lindsay
Cllr S Chapman
Cllr A Cross
Cllr R Carter

Cllr N Lacey-Clarke – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr L Hitchings – late arrival at 7:16pm
Cllr H White
Cllr P Osborne
Cllr C Stevens
Cllr C Jacques

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Operations Manager
Harold Galpin
Nicci Brown

Gary Jarman, Pageant Productions
Daniel Cadisch, Citizens Advice Central Dorset
Helen Matson, Blandford Youth & Community Centre

143. PUBLIC SESSION

Cllr H Miéville welcomed Gary Jarman to the meeting, who is filming the meeting on behalf of the DAPTC. He went on to encourage Councillors to attend the Mayor's Charity Night at The Crown Hotel on Saturday 9th March 2024 and tickets can be secured with the Mayor's Assistant.

- 143.1 Daniel Cadisch, Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Central Dorset – The Citizens Advice continues to offer a face-to-face service four days a week, a free telephone line people can call for free, and the digital services available via the website. Daniel feels that it is a privilege to work with the team they have and he has been enthused by younger people stepping up to volunteer. Daniel reported that 650 Blandford Forum residents have been assisted in the last year, which is an increase of 29% on the previous year. The issues can be very complex and are often interlinked. The top three issues are charitable support and access to financial help in crisis, welfare benefits (Daniel explained that obtaining medical evidence to support a disability claim is vital to its success and is not straightforward), and personal debt. There has been a large increase in those who are suffering with fuel debt, with some issues being over incorrect bills, problems with meters, rising prices, and the bombardment of reminders from energy companies that can overwhelm some individuals. Citizens Advice has specialist case workers based in other parts of Dorset, which includes a specialist employment unit that helps to keep people in work.
- 143.2 Barrie Cooper, Blandford Youth & Community Centre – The Acting Chairman spoke about the request for a service level agreement (SLA). He confirmed that there have been several changes over the years and they have recently brought the accounts in house instead of using an accountant. The Chair of Governors of The Blandford School has agreed a 50% reduction in the rent to assist with the costs of the youth centre. Barrie stated that it costs about £20,000 a year to run the youth centre and the trustees would like the council to start a SLA that is on the same basis as the last SLA.

144. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Cllr Quayle delivered the report.

- 144.1 Grant for Community Tree Planting Projects – A new grants scheme is now open for applications.

144. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS (cont.)

- 144.2 Blandford Library – As well as books, and many other services, the library has iPads to borrow for up to six weeks and volunteers attend the library to help people who need digital support.
- 144.3 Children’s Centre – There are a number of free activities being held at the Centre.
- 144.4 Cost of Living Support – Dorset Council has a website portal that explains all the help that is available. Cllr Quayle referred to some of the guidance Dorset Council has released regarding mould in homes and how to prevent/tackle it.
- 144.5 Travel – Cllr Quayle said Dorset Council is out gritting in low temperatures and he reminded everyone to check the travel updates to help avoid issues.

There was a general discussion about road conditions and potholes, and Cllr Quayle is going to look into an issue raised by Cllr Lindsay regarding a bus diversion.

145. APOLOGIES

Cllr K Herbert

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

None had been submitted.

147. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18th DECEMBER 2023

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Holmes, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 abstention) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

148. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

Photocopier Charges – The office switched to the current photocopying and printing machine in 2021/22 to help reduce costs and the RFO has provided the charges, which have considerably reduced from the year ended 31st March 2019 - £986.85, to the year to date (2nd January 2024) - £540.93.

Blandford Forum Farmers & Makers Markets 2024 – The market will return this year, and they are planning for the following dates that fall on a Sunday: 24 March, 28 April, 26 May, 23 June, 28 July, 22 September, 27 October, 24 November.

Declaration of Acceptance of Office Book – There are only a few pages left in the current book, so a new one has been ordered in preparation for the May elections and the new council.

Councillor Badges – Councillor badges have been ordered ready for the new council in May. These were last ordered in 2019 in readiness for the current council.

Elizabeth Road Allotments – The transfer has been chased and on 17th January 2024, a Dorset Council officer confirmed that our application has been successful and formal notification on the transfer, any conditions and next steps will be sent ‘in the next few days’.

Corn Exchange Meeting – There will be an extraordinary meeting for the Corn Exchange on Monday 12th February 2024 and the agenda will be sent out on Monday.

149. CIVIC REPORT

The paper was sent to Councillors via email (see Appendix A).

150. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM THE BLANDFORD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR A SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

It was suggested by Cllr L Hitchings, but not proposed and seconded, that the Town Council approves a one-off amount of £2,500 now, followed by a one-year SLA of £5,000 for the 2024/25 financial year. The Town Council will then consider a service level agreement along with the other SLA recipients starting from 1st April 2024.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (8 in favour, 4 against, 3 abstentions) that

The Town Council approves a one-off, unrestricted grant of £5,000 from the Grants budget to support the Youth & Community Centre (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence Localism Act 2011 s1-8). The Town Council will then consider a service level agreement along with the other SLA recipients starting from 1st April 2025.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

151. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

151.1 Recreation & Amenities Committee Meeting dated 22nd January 2024

151.1.1 Recommendations – None

151.1.2 The Minutes were RECEIVED.

152. TO RECEIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MAYORAL ALLOWANCE WORKING GROUP

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

Cllr Lacey-Clarke suggested a resolution on the charitable donations matter prior to the next full council meeting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Miéville, SECONDED by Cllr White and AGREED (13 in favour, 2 against) that

The matter is deferred to the February meeting.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

153. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR FREE VENUE HIRE FOR WOODHOUSE GARDENS PAVILION FROM IN JOLLY GOOD COMPANY

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (11 in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions) that

The Town Council approves the request for free venue hire for Jolly Good Company at Woodhouse Gardens for the 2024/25 financial year, which consists of 21 bookings totalling £389.94 (plus any increases agreed on 22nd January 2024 at R&A).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

154. TO AMEND THE TITLE OF THE HONORARIUM POSITION OF DEPUTY TOWN CRIER

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

The Town Council agrees to change the position of Deputy Town Crier to Town Crier, resulting in the town having two Town Criers.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

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

155.1 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group – Blandford +

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

155.2 BFTC Commemoration Group

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

The paper was noted (see Appendix F), along with the update on event planning.

155.3 Climate Change and Biodiversity

The meeting has been re-arranged for 22nd February 2024 and B+ members are invited to attend.

155.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Stevens, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED (13 in favour, 2 abstentions) that

The Town Council agrees that part of the parking/market area is pedestrianised in the Market Place for an initial six month trial period subject to Dorset Council’s approval. Due to timing, this will be linked to the completion of the regeneration of the Town Hall/Corn Exchange.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

156. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr Carter has distributed the Minutes of the Foundation Governors of The Blandford School and the Leisure Centre prior to the meeting.

157. CONFIDENTIAL

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

157.1 To approve the updated Heads of Terms for the land north of the bypass (deferred from December meeting and awaiting advice from solicitor)

This item was deferred until receipt of the advice note from the solicitor, which has still not been received.

The meeting closed at 8:44pm.

SIGNED

DATED