



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

To: All Members of the Finance & Staffing Committee
(Cllr L Hitchings, Cllr N Lacey-Clarke, Cllr H Miéville, Cllr R Holmes, Cllr S Hitchings, Cllr S Chapman, Cllr A Cross, Cllr C Stevens and Cllr T Clarkson)
All other Members of the Town Council
Members of the Public & the Press

Dorset Council Councillors

Dear Member,

FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee to be held in the **Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion**, The Tabernacle, Blandford Forum DT11 7DN on **Monday 24th March 2025 at 7:00pm** to consider the following items. This meeting will also be available to view online using Microsoft Teams [using this link](#).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Linda Scott-Giles'.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
17th March 2025

A G E N D A

Prior to consideration of the following Agenda, there will be a democratic quarter of an hour, which may be extended at the discretion of the Committee, during which time members of the public may speak. During the course of the meeting, members of the public and our elected representatives from the Dorset Council may indicate they wish to speak, and, at the discretion of the Chairman, and with the approval of the Members, they may be allowed to do so on points of information only. The Committee may on occasion invite members of the public to comment on specific issues where points of information or their particular knowledge on a subject might prove of benefit to the Committee.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, belief or disability), Crime & Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights. Disabled access is available.

All in attendance should be aware that filming, recording, photography or otherwise may occur during the meeting.

1. Public Session
2. Apologies
3. To receive any Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations
4. [Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th December 2024](#)
5. [Town Clerk's Report & Correspondence](#)
6. Analytical Review of Expenditure against Budget for the following:
 - 6.1 [Administration Budget for the year to 28th February 2025](#)
 - 6.2 [Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 28th February 2025](#)
 - 6.3 [Reserve Accounts as at 28th February 2025](#)

7. Review of Finance Documentation (sent to all Councillors prior to the meeting)
- To receive and retrospectively approve the:
- 7.1 Petty Cash Transfers 5-8 totalling £461.76.
 - 7.2 Direct debit payments for the period 1st November 2024 to 28th February 2025 (sheets 226-229) totalling £140,594.57.
 - 7.3 Online Faster Payments FP 272 – FP 285 totalling £216,915.34.
 - 7.4 Online Corn Exchange Faster Payments CE031 – CE039 totalling £578,474.72.
 - 7.5 [Investment Account for the period to 28th February 2025](#)
 - 7.6 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash checks
 - 7.7 [Bank Reconciliation to 28th February 2025](#)
8. Internal Auditor
- 8.1 [To receive the Internal Auditor's Reports for December 2024 and March 2025](#)
 - 8.2 [To confirm the Internal Auditor appointment for 2025/26](#)
9. [Insurance Risk Assessment relating to the Town Council's Insurance Cover and Approval of Insurance Premiums for 2025/26](#)
10. Review of the Risk Assessment Management Policy (including Financial) Arrangements for 2025/26 (sent to Councillors separately due to the size of the document)
11. [Review of Asset Register](#)
12. [Review of Variable Direct Debits](#)
13. [To consider the current status of bad debts with the Town Council](#)
14. [To receive a report on the free venue hire requests received for 2024/2025](#)
15. [To review the Finance & Staffing Committee Remit and the Financial Regulations](#)
16. [To approve the Investment Policy](#)
17. [To consider the virement of underspent reserves and the current status of the General Reserves](#)
18. Confidential
- The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.
- 18.1 Town Clerk's Report
 - 18.2 To consider a request regarding staffing hours (distributed to Councillors)

Minutes of the Town Council and Committee meetings are available from the Town Clerk's Office and at www.blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk.

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



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



Twinned with Mortain, France



Tel: 01258 454500
Email: admin@blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk
www.blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk

Town Clerk's Report

Staff Training – Since last March staff have attended the following training courses:

	2024
Linda and Jon	Role of SAG and Martins Law- Dorset Safety Group
Linda and Sarah	Anti Terrorist training
Kat Clark	ACT awareness course
Linda, Jon, Rachael, Amanda, Kat, Gary, Huw, Neil, Tom, Gareth, Nick, Chris, Andy S,	Counter Terrorism training
Becci Brady	Thinking about Reviewing Your Neighbourhood Plan?
Linda Scott-Giles	VE Day 80: A Shared Moment of the Celebration of 80 Years of Peace - 8th May 2025
Kat Clark	SLCC - How to Market your Town to attract Visitors webinar
Kat Clark	SLCC - Cemetery Matters - Looking to the Future webinar
Gary, Nick & Chris	Level 3 QCF First Aid Course
Becci Brady	SLCC- Agendas and Minutes
Becci Brady	SLCC- Reforms to National Planning Policy
Becci Brady	Engage more effectively with young people
Andy Reynolds	Market Licensing
Jon Goodenough	Fire Warden and various courses
	2025
Becci Brady	SLCC- How to use Canva
Becci Brady	Fire Warden Training
All Staff	Fire Warden
Linda Scott-Giles	Employment Rights Bill
Becci Brady	CILCA
Linda Scott-Giles & Becci Brady	DAPTC- Future Planning
Becci Brady	Introduction to Planning and Design Codes
Becci Brady	New planning services register demo

Councillor Training – Since the March meeting in 2024, Councillors have attended the following courses:

	2024
Cllr Holmes and Cllr Chapman	DCMP
Cllr Clarkson	DAPTC New Cllr Induction
Cllr Cross	DAPTC Planning Webinar
Cllr Holmes	DAPTC Changing Chairs
Cllr Holmes	DAPTC Introduction to Planning
Cllr Chapman	DAPTC New Cllr Essentials
Cllr Chapman	DAPTC Changing Chairs
Cllr Putt	DAPTC New Councillor Essentials
Cllr Clarkson, Cllr Cross	Counter Terrorism Training
Cllr Chapman, Cllr Hitchings	Counter Terrorism Training
Cllr Putt	Counter Terrorism Training
Cllr Chapman	DC Meeting via DAPTC - Shaftesbury for North - For TC's to question DC
Cllr Holmes	Flood Wardens Drop-in Blandford Office 2pm
Cllr Putt	Introduction to Planning
Cllr Chapman	National Planning Policy Framework - Potential Changes
Cllr Putt and Cllr Chapman	Budgeting
Cllr Putt and Cllr Chapman	Finance for Councillors
	2025
Cllr Putt	DAPTC Engage more effectively with young people
Cllr Chapman	DAPTC National Planning Policy Framework
Cllr Chapman	Finance for Councillors
Cllr Clarkson, Cllr Cross	Future Planning
Cllr Chapman,	Future Planning
Cllr Chapman, Cllr Clarkson	Carbon Literacy
Cllr Chapman, Cllr Clarkson	Carbon Literacy
Cllr Holmes	Future Planning
Cllr Chapman	Introduction to Planning and Design Codes

Public Works Loan Board – The loan for the Corn Exchange project is in the process of being transferred to the Town Council's current account and it has been reduced from a 50-year term to a 25-year term.

Work Experience Students – The Blandford School had asked the Town Clerk to take on two students for work experience week starting 10th March 2025. Alfie Owen spent the whole week with the Town Council and Oli Hayward was with us on Thursday and Friday. Both students attended the working group meeting and Planning meeting held on the evening of 10th March 2025 and thoroughly enjoyed it. When meeting with the chairman of council, they expressed an interest in being youth advisors and attending future council meetings and they are currently discussing this with their sixth form teachers.

Administration Budget for the year to 28th February 2025

ADMINISTRATION COSTS £		As at 28.02.25				
N/L code		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Budget Variance	
4010	Advertising	600	550	400	(150)	Committee Clerk advert/pop up café flag
4012	Audit	4,500	4,125	3,289	(836)	
4014	Bank Charges	200	183	80	(104)	
4015	Property Fund Admin Charge / Exp	4,500	4,125	4,356	231	CCLA admin on Q1 to Q3
4018	Equipment Maintenance/Hire	500	458	445	(14)	Boiler rental to Feb25
4028	New Equipment	250	229	236	7	
4039	IT New Equip	105	96	290	194	New market laptop
4040	IT Maintenance/Software	10,435	9,565	7,517	(2,048)	
4041	IT Consumables	40	37	88	51	HTM cable, mouse
4042	Professional Services	10,300	9,442	7,843	(1,598)	Worknest insurance for the year/Rugby Club lease
4050	Newsletter/Forum focus/publication	2,660	2,438	3,126	688	Newsletter/delivery charges
4053	Photocopier Charges	800	733	977	244	Service contract for copier- Oct to March 25
4054	Stationery & Printing	1,250	1,146	417	(729)	
4057	Subscriptions	2,500	2,292	2,661	370	Annual subs: DAPTC, NAMBA, ICCM
4060	Postage	450	413	841	429	Franking machine top up
4065	Telephones	8,862	8,124	2,671	(5,452)	
4094	Staff Training & Travel Exps	4,000	3,667	4,235	568	Includes Occupational Health examinations
4095	Staff Travel & Expenses	3,000	2,750	1,652	(1,098)	
4096	CIlrs allow, Training & Travel Exps	5,500	5,042	2,343	(2,699)	
4097	CIlrs Welfare / Meeting Exps	100	92	19	(72)	
4099	Staff Welfare	400	367	353	(13)	
4301	Health & Safety Staffing	150	138	34	(104)	
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>61,102</i>	<i>56,010</i>	<i>43,873</i>	<i>-12,137</i>	
4701	Insurance	15,075	13,819	14,084	265	Insurance annual renewal/additional premium put to CE
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>15,075</i>	<i>13,819</i>	<i>14,084</i>	<i>265</i>	
4800	Mayoral Expenses	2,881	2,641	170	(2,471)	Charity calendars
4802	Civic Expenses	5,305	4,863	5,815	952	Remembrance Service/Civic Day
4805	Civic Twinning	150	138		(138)	
4806	Civic - Freedom	150	138		(138)	
	Honorariums - Town Crier/Mace					
4803	Bearer	1,400	1,283	550	(733)	
	Membership to Guild of Mace					
4809	Bearers and Town Criers	100	92	40	(52)	
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>9,986</i>	<i>9,154</i>	<i>6,575</i>	<i>(2,579)</i>	
5500	Grants S137	6,000	0		0	
5505	Grants SLA	23,000	21,083	15,730	(5,353)	
		<i>29,000</i>	<i>21,083</i>	<i>15,730</i>	<i>-5,353</i>	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	115,163	78,983	80,261	(19,805)	
INCOME						
2025	Interest	2,000	1,833	4,064	2,230	Santander 8119 interest
2003	Property Fund Dividend	30,000	27,500	0	(27,500)	Transferred to Corn Exchange
2030	Cricket Club Loan Interest			43	43	
3701	Events				0	
3893	Grant Income	0	0		0	
3894	Misc Income	500	458	2,738	2,280	Includes insurance payout re office roof
3897	Overtime Charges	50	46	367	321	
3899	Photocopying	150	138	143	6	
3901	Proof of Life			123	123	
3920	Admin Charge - Barnes for Rec	5,990	5,491	4,493	(998)	Invoice quarterly
3925	Salary charge -out to Barnes for a Re	27,500	25,208	20,625	(4,583)	
	TOTAL INCOME	66,190	60,674	32,596	(28,079)	
	NET COST/ (INCOME)	48,973	18,309	47,666	8,274	

Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 28th February 2025

ADMINISTRATION COSTS £

N/L code		2024/25					Budget Variance
		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Covered by Reserves	Revised Actual	
4010	Advertising	600	550	400		400	(150)
4012	Audit	4,500	4,125	3,289		3,289	(836)
4014	Bank Charges	200	183	80		80	(104)
4015	Property Fund Admin Charge / Exp	4,500	4,125	4,356		4,356	231
4018	Equipment Maintenance/Hire	500	458	445		445	(14)
4028	New Equipment	250	229	236		236	7
4039	IT New Equip	105	96	885	595	290	194
4040	IT Maintenance/Software	10,435	9,565	7,517		7,517	(2,048)
4041	IT Consumables	40	37	88		88	51
4042	Professional Services	10,300	9,442	34,202	26,359	7,843	(1,598)
4050	Newsletter/Forum focus/publications	2,500	2,292	3,126		3,126	834
4052	Publications	160	147			0	(147)
4053	Photocopier Charges	800	733	977		977	244
4054	Stationery & Printing	1,250	1,146	456	39	417	(729)
4057	Subscriptions	2,500	2,292	2,661		2,661	370
4060	Postage	450	413	841		841	429
4065	Telephones	8,862	8,124	2,671		2,671	(5,452)
4094	Staff Training & Travel Exps	4,000	3,667	4,235		4,235	568
4095	Staff Travel & Expenses	3,000	2,750	1,652		1,652	(1,098)
4096	Cllrs allow, Training & Travel Exps	5,500	5,042	2,343		2,343	(2,699)
4097	Meeting Exps	100	92	19		19	(72)
4099	Staff Welfare	400	367	353		353	(13)
4301	Health & Safety Staffing	150	138	34		34	(104)
41079	EMR - Neighbourhood Plan			121	121	0	0
5500	Grants - General	6,000	5,500	-956		-956	(6,456)
5505	Grants - SLAs	23,000	21,083	15,730		15,730	(5,353)
Sub Total		90,102	82,594	85,761	27,113	58,647	-23,946
4701	Insurance	15,075	13,819	14,084		14,084	265
Sub Total		15,075	13,819	14,084	0	14,084	265

ADMINISTRATION COSTS £

N/L code		2024/25					Budget Variance
		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Covered by Reserves	Revised Actual	
4800	Mayoral Expenses	2,881	2,641	170		170	(2,471)
4802	Civic Expenses	5,305	4,863	6,575	760	5,815	952
4805	Civic Twinning	150	138			0	(138)
4806	Civic - Freedom	150	138			0	(138)
Honorarium - Town Crier/Mace Bearer		1,400	1,283	550		550	(733)
4809	Membership to Guild of Mace Bearers and Town Criers	100	92	40		40	(52)
Sub Total		9,986	9,154	7,335	760	6,575	(2,579)
TOTAL EXPENSES		115,163	105,566	107,179	27,873	79,305	(26,261)
INCOME							
2025	Interest	2,000	7,200	106,536	102,472	4,064	(3,136)
2003	Property Fund Dividend	30,000	27,500	40,366	40,366	0	(27,500)
2030	Cricket Club loan interest			43		43	43
3893	Grant Income	0	0			0	0
3894	Misc Income	500	458	3,035	297	2,739	2,280
3897	Overtime Charges	50	46	367		367	321
3899	Photocopying	150	138	143		143	6
3901	Proof of Life			123		123	123
3920	Admin Charge - Barnes for Rec	5,990	5,491	4,493		4,493	(998)
3925	Salary charge -out to Barnes for a R	27,500	25,208	20,625		20,625	(4,583)
TOTAL INCOME		66,190	66,041	175,730	143,134	32,596	(33,445)
NET COST/ (INCOME)		48,973	39,525	(68,552)	(115,261)	46,709	7,184

Reserve Accounts as at 28th February 2025

Nominal Code(s)	Standard Asset Replacement Accruals	Responsible Committee	Balances	Movement to date	Balance at 28.02.25	Sub Totals
			£			£
1300	IT	F & S	24,036.86	6,070.98	30,107.84	
1305	Skate park	R & A	79,251.48	- 71,103.80	8,147.68	
1310	General Play Equipment	R & A	85,140.51	9,792.33	94,932.84	
1315	Maintenance Equipment Replacement	R & A	15,433.60	2,688.63	18,122.23	
1320	Vehicle Replacement	R & A	18,990.00	3,464.50	22,454.50	
1325	Tractor Replacement	R & A	18,820.80	2,269.60	21,090.40	
1330	Mower Replacement	R & A	39,890.02	- 717.35	39,172.67	
1340	CCTV / ANPR	T & GP	43,371.78	1,107.40	44,479.18	
1345	Benches	T/C	47,751.50	14,676.22	62,427.72	
1350	Glenmore Depot	R & A	39,999.99	23,115.06	63,115.05	
1351	B/Heights Play Equipment	R & A	13,322.91	1,493.22	14,816.13	
1352	B/Heights Maintenance Equipment Replacement	R & A	13,190.91	10,848.18	24,039.09	
		-	439,200.36			442,905.33
	Earmarked Accounts					
1020	T & GP Town Maps	T&GP	3,282.77		3,282.77	
1021	T & GP DCC Highways	T&GP	86.25		86.25	
1025	T & GP Christmas Lights	T&GP	- 469.75	2,138.55	1,668.80	
1030	T & GP Tourism	T&GP	3,555.44		3,555.44	
1035	T & GP Twinning	T&GP	1,302.81		1,302.81	
1040	T & GP Town Improvements	T&GP	5,190.10	- 1,312.00	3,878.10	
1042	T & GP Seat Replacement	T&GP	2,633.81		2,633.81	
1045	T & GP Contingency	T&GP	908.33		908.33	
1135	Railway Arches	T & GP	3,745.56	- 1,588.50	2,157.06	
		-	20,235.32			19,473.37
10510	R & A B/Heights Phase 1 POS	R&A	56,766.22	- 6,853.34	49,912.88	
10520	R & A B/Heights Phase 2 POS	R&A	24,020.57	- 3,071.90	20,948.67	
10521	R & A B/Heights Phase 2 - Play area com Sums	R&A	2,382.43	- 125.00	2,257.43	
10530	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	12,108.55		12,108.55	
10531	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	50,966.32		50,966.32	
10532	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	57,442.93		57,442.93	
10533	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	24,483.78		24,483.78	
10534	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	34,900.27		34,900.27	
10535	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	172,440.51		172,440.51	
10536	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	113,457.57		113,457.57	
10537	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	9,978.26		9,978.26	
10538	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	52,801.28		52,801.28	
10539	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	116,943.53		116,943.53	
10540	R & A B/Heights Phase 3	R&A	13,011.55		13,011.55	
		-	741,703.77			731,653.53
1060	R & A Plan Preventative Maintenance	R & A	20,108.91	- 20,108.91	-	
1061	R & A Cemetery Chapel	R & A	8,420.00	1,000.00	9,420.00	
1062	R & A Cemetery Workshop	R & A	11,000.00	1,000.00	12,000.00	
1064	R & A Cemetery Wall	R & A	32,654.49		32,654.49	
1065	R & A DDA	R & A	373.87	- 373.87	-	
1067	R & A Play area fencing & surfacing	R & A	11,536.66	4,500.00	16,036.66	
1068	R & A Larksmead Outdoor fitness	R & A	2,000.00		2,000.00	
1070	R & A Seat Replacement	R & A	1,695.85		1,695.85	
1071	R & A Skate Fest	R & A	- 214.89	534.23	319.34	
1072	R & A Community Fridge	R & A	1,072.00		1,072.00	
1075	R & A 5 Year Tree Survey	R & A	16,913.20	2,000.00	18,913.20	
1080	R & A H&S Mem Cemetery	R & A	1,263.00		1,263.00	
1090	R & A Woodhouse Garden Wall Repairs	R & A	22,150.00	- 145.00	22,005.00	
1096	R & A Contingency	R & A	1,000.00		1,000.00	
		-	129,973.09			118,379.54
	Other Earmarked Accounts					
1001	Earmarked Interest	F & S	1,984.64	1,249.55	3,234.19	
1002	Property Fund Dividend	F & S	25,656.49	14,709.30	40,365.79	
1003	Office relocation		17,980.02	- 6,111.18	11,868.84	
1005	Election Costs	T/C	5,856.35	2,410.60	8,266.95	
1006	Youth Services	T/C	10,726.03		10,726.03	
1009	BFTC Commemoration Group	T/C	242.60	372.07	614.67	
1010	Capital Interest	F & S	19,016.63	138.96	19,155.59	
1011	Land North of Bypass / Sport & Recreation/Cricket Club path	T/C	5,772.98		5,772.98	
1012	The Blandford Events Group	T/C	442.17		442.17	
1013	Neighbourhood Plan	T/C	4,797.13	- 120.69	4,676.44	
1015	Support for Essential Services (Earmarked)	T/C	49.00		49.00	
1017	Woodhouse Garden Re-build	T/C	19,981.67		19,981.67	
1019	St Peter & St Paul's Churchyard (Listed Wall & Town Pump)	T & GP	44,351.48		44,351.48	
1050	Allotments	R&A	4,512.13	672.65	5,184.78	
1335	Civic Regalia	F & S	14,474.63	- 2,136.81	12,337.82	
1195	Improvements to Market Area	T/C	69,500.00	- 500.00	69,000.00	
1125	Cemetery Field Project	R & A	1,000.00		1,000.00	
1175	CCTV / ANPR - New Equipment	T & GP	2,451.23		2,451.23	
1500	General Reserves	T/C	214,615.22	- 26,674.72	187,940.50	
		-	463,410.40			447,420.13
	Capital Projects					
1104	Corn Exchange S106 Funds	T/C	83,177.06	2,100.00	85,277.06	
1105	Corn Exchange	T/C	442,140.35	208,363.38	650,503.73	
1110	Corn Exchange Promotions Group	T/C	1,583.11		1,583.11	
1115	Corn Exchange Project Development	T/C	163,928.83	10,000.00	173,928.83	
1116	Corn Exchange HLF Stage 1 Matchfunding	T/C	172,379.97	10,000.00	182,379.97	
1117	PWLB repayments			180,081.80	180,081.80	
1120	Corn Exchange & Venues Refurbishment Project	T/C	79,000.00		79,000.00	
1122	Corn Exchange Community Hall S106 Funds	T/C	103,292.81		103,292.81	
		-	1,045,502.13			1,456,047.31
	Total Reserves		2,840,025.07	375,854.14	3,215,879.21	3,215,879.21

Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period 1st November 2025 to 28th February 2025

In line with the Town Council's Investment Policy, the Chairman of Finance & Staffing, the RFO and the Town Clerk have made the following investments on behalf of the council, seeking the highest possible interest rates and financial security.

Amount £	Details (including period)	Interest Rate %	Bank
1,607,059.32	Public Sector Deposit Fund	4.57%	CCLA
665,280.68	2 Year Fixed Rate Bond – matures May 2025	4%	Cambridge & Counties Bank
287,605.59	Santander 95-day account	4.57%	Santander

CCLA / Public Sector Deposit Fund Information

The Local Authorities' Property Fund Prices and Dividend Yields



End of	Oct-24	Sep-24	Aug-24	Jul-24	Jun-24	May-24	Apr-24	Mar-24	Feb-24	Jan-24	Dec-23	Nov-23
Offer Price p	295.22	294.67	294.40	294.55	294.25	294.22	294.73	295.72	296.32	296.62	297.71	301.04
Net Asset Value p	276.55	276.04	275.78	275.93	275.65	275.62	276.09	277.02	277.59	277.86	278.88	282.01
Bid Price p	272.26	271.76	271.51	271.65	271.38	271.34	271.81	272.73	273.28	273.56	274.56	277.63
~ 'Dividend on XD Date p		3.44			3.74			3.62			3.59	
~ Dividend* - Last 12 Months p	14.39	14.39	14.69	14.69	14.69	14.30	14.30	14.30	13.72	13.72	13.72	13.27
Dividend Yield on NAV %	5.20	5.21	5.33	5.32	5.33	5.19	5.18	5.16	4.94	4.94	4.92	4.71
Fund Size £m	1032.3	1032.3	1031.3	1032.0	1037.2	1037.2	1039.0	1042.4	1044.7	1138.8	1142.9	1155.7

~ Please note this is a provisional dividend.

Risk Warning

Please remember that the value of units and the income from them can fall as well as rise and an investor may not get back the full amount invested. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. The Property Fund's unit value will reflect fluctuations in property values and rents. The units are intended only for long-term investment and are not suitable for money liable to be required to be spent in the near term. They are realisable only on each

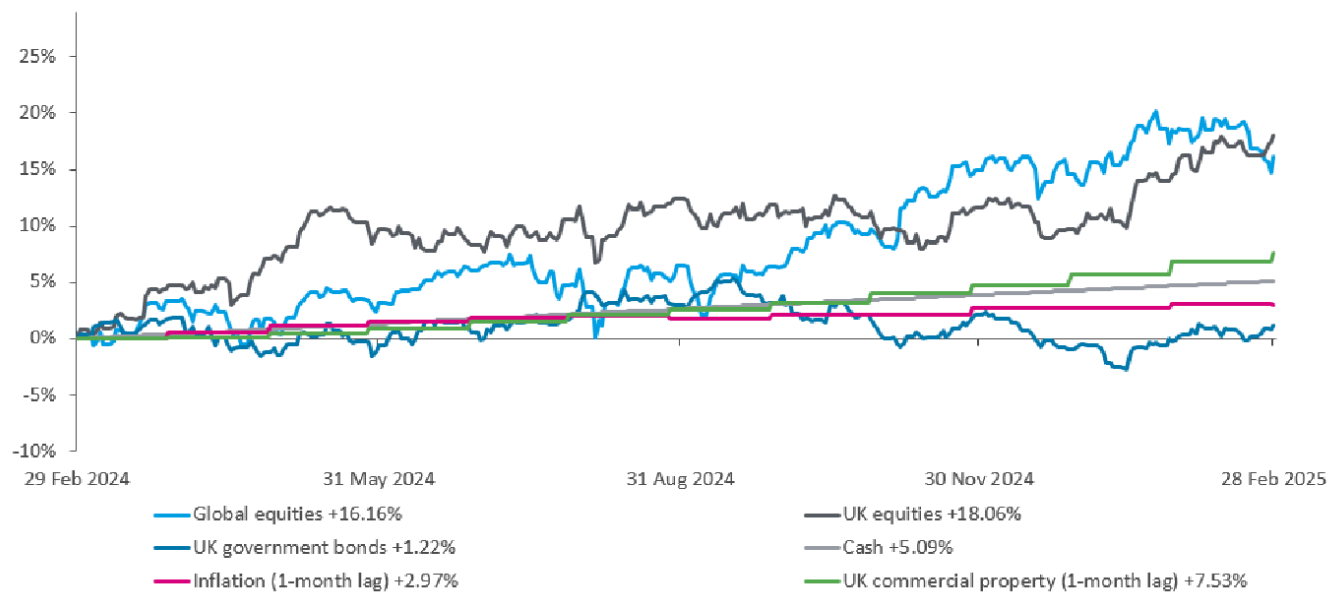
Source: CCLA

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London EC4R 3AB
Telephone: 0800 022 3505
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Market report

The headlines



Bank Reconciliation to 28th February 2025

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

WHEN IN RED = NEEDS UPDATING

NOTES

R = RECONCILED

Bank Reconciliation as at 28th February 2025

<u>Bank Statement as at</u>	28th February 2025		
Current Account		£125,489.45	
Less Unpresented Cheques		-£72.71	
Plus uncleared receipts		£602.72	
			£126,019.46
<u>Santander 95 Day Notice A/C10555310</u>	28th February 2025	£287,605.59	
4.57% 4.32% from 01.11.24			£287,605.59
<u>Santander 31 Day Notice A/C10555349</u>	28th February 2025	£78,451.42	
4.08% 3.83% from 01.11.24			£78,451.42
<u>Santander Business Reserve A/c 10138119</u>	28th February 2025		
3.23% 2.98% from 01.11.24			
Statement balance		£102,009.98	
Interest pending			£102,009.98
<u>CCLA/PSDF</u>	28th February 2025		
0101190001PC		£1,607,059.32	
February interest		£5,691.71	
Transferred			£1,612,751.03
Cambridge & Counties Bank (2 yr fixed rate @ 4%)	28th February 2025	£665,280.68	
09.05.2023 08.05.2025	Annual Interest in May		£665,280.68
Petty Cash as at	28th February 2025	£250.00	
			£250.00
			<u>£2,872,368.16</u>

Prepared by: *A Crocker*
RFO

Date: 12/03/2025

Checked by: *[Signature]*
Town Clerk

Date: 14/3/25

Checked by: _____
Chairman of Finance Committee

Date:

Awaiting approval from the Committee Chairman.

DARKIN MILLER ~ CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Accountancy ~ Internal Audit ~ Taxation



FINAL

Internal audit report 2024/25

Visit 1 of 3

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 30th December 2024

Report author: R Darkin-Miller
Email: r.darkin@darkinmiller.co.uk

Introduction

This report contains a note of the audit recommendations made to Blandford Forum Town Council following the carrying out of internal audit testing on site on 13th December 2024 with subsequent remote testing.

The audit work has been carried out in accordance with Appendix 9 of the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils: A Practitioners' Guide', as amended by the additional requirements of the later AGARs.

An internal audit covers the review of the operation of the Council's internal control environment. It is not designed to review and give full assurance over every transaction carried out by the Council. Instead it enables the auditor, following the sample testing of a number of different types of transaction, to give an opinion as to whether or not the control objectives are being achieved across a range of financial and governance systems.

Audit Opinion

As this audit report is an interim one, no audit opinion is offered at this stage.

The report issued after the final visit for 2024/25 (which will be in May or June 2025) will contain the audit opinion.

The following areas were reviewed during this audit visit:

1. Bookkeeping
2. Payments (work in progress)
3. Risk Management
4. Payroll
5. Exemption (confirm not covered)
6. Transparency (work in progress)
7. Public Rights
8. Publication

Audit Recommendations

Recommendations made during the audit are shown in appendix one to this report.

Recommendations are graded as follows:

Rating	Significance
High	Either a critical business risk is not being adequately addressed or there is substantial non-conformity with regulations and accepted standards.
Medium	Either a key business risk is not being adequately addressed or there is a degree of non-conformity with regulations and accepted standards.
Low	Either minor non-conformity with procedure or opportunity to improve working practices further.

The number of recommendations made at this audit visit and their priority are summarised in the following table:

Rating	Number
High	0
Medium	1
Low	1
Info	0
TOTAL	2

I would like to thank Linda Scott-Giles, Town Clerk; Amanda Crocker, Responsible Finance Officer for their assistance during this audit.

**INTERNAL AUDIT OF BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
FINAL REPORT VISIT 1 OF 3: 30th DECEMBER 2024**

Appendix 1 – Recommendations and Action Plan

Recommendation number	Detail	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Management Response	Responsible Officer	Due Date
2.1 – Ensure value of payments minuted agrees to payment list totals	<p>I checked to see that payments in the cashbook were supported by invoices, authorised and minuted. The Council had an unusually high number of high value transactions during the year as a result of work on the Corn Exchange. I tested 46 payments which covered 26 transfers and 37 invoices. All were supported by invoice or other paperwork, authorised, and appeared on a payment list, but I noted that:</p> <p>1. 24/63 were on a list with a minute that agreed with the total of the payments lists being approved.</p> <p>2. 9/63 were on a list where the payment list total was £937285.81 and the related minute £837258.81, a difference of £100027. This appears to be an error on the minute (minute 24.3, F&S 23/09/24).</p> <p>3. 15/63 were on a list where the payments lists included £320k of transfers which had been included on two sets of lists (as the limit for individual transfers is £100k meaning that the payments lists needed to be restated, and there was a delay agreeing the original transfers). Min 93 F&S 10/06/24 refers. Excluding the duplicated payments lists means that the Committee approved the correct value of payments for the period.</p>	M	<p>The issue of the incorrect calculation will be double-checked with the relevant staff member.</p> <p>Similarly, the inclusion of duplicate FPS will also be addressed.</p>	TC/RFO/BSO	<p>January 2025</p> <p>Minute to be amended at the F&S meeting in March.</p>
	<p>This occurred with another payments list minute, for which the minute value was £109k under the total of the lists as the lists included a duplicate £109k where the payment was split as it was over £100k. Min 24.24 F&S refers.</p> <p>4. 15/63 have not yet been minuted as they are too recent, and will be checked at visit 2.</p> <p>I recommend that:</p> <p>1. Min 24.3 is amended to reflect the correct value approved; and</p> <p>2. Future minutes exclude from the payments list totals any duplicated figures so that the correct value is approved.</p> <p>This will ensure that there is a clear audit trail for Council approvals of payments made by the Council.</p>				
7.1 – Ensure all staff paid mileage at the correct rate	<p>I checked to see that other payments to employees were reasonable, properly supported and approved by Council. I found that the mileage form used by one member of staff contained incorrect rates which meant that the employee was paid 5.5p less per mile than the rate to which they were entitled. The RFO has noted that this will be corrected in January.</p> <p>I recommend that the form is corrected for future use, and the mileage allowance due is paid as planned in order to ensure that the correct amount is paid.</p>	L	The form will be amended to include the three types of mileage claim: standard 45p, additional 20, and passenger allowance of 5.5p. Using purely this form going forward will prevent any further confusion.	TC/RFO	Immediate

The report from March's visit is to follow.

To confirm the Internal Auditor appointment for 2025/26

Background

This is a new requirement because of the feedback from the external audit, which has asked for the Town Council to approve the Internal Auditor on an annual basis despite having approved the new appointment in December for a five-year period. This item has therefore been added to the March F&S agenda.

Report

The following resolution was made in December 2024:

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke and AGREED unanimously that a **RECOMMENDATION** is made to full council that

The Committee appoints Company A as the Internal Auditor for the financial years 2025/26 – 2029/30, based on 4 x 7 hour days, and with the long-term five year contract (giving a 2.5% saving on the hourly scale rate, which they anticipate rising by £1.50 per scale hour from 2025/26 to 2026/27), the cost to the council would be £1,425.82 plus VAT for 2025/26, £1,472.31 for 2026/27, £1,518.80 for 2027/28, £1,580.80 for 2028/29 and £1,642.78 for 2029/30 giving a five year total of £7,640.51 plus VAT.

The long-term contract could be terminated at any time by either party giving three months' notice and would give an approximate saving of £172.55 over the five years. The number of days required is based on historical performance and generally proves fairly accurate. In the event that additional work arises, this will be invoiced at the quoted rates. If less work is needed the Town Council will be charged proportionately less.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee recommends to full council that the Internal Auditor appointment is approved for the 2025/2026 financial year.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th January 2025

Insurance Risk Assessment relating to the Town Council's Insurance Cover and Approval of Insurance Premiums for 2025/2026

At the Finance & Staffing Committee meeting held on 18th March 2024, a recommendation was made to full council on 25th March 2024, which was approved as follows:

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

The Town Council confirms that there are no other aspects of insurance cover that they wish to amend and approves expenditure authority to enter into a further 3-year long term agreement with Company A until 18th April 2027 at a cost of 3 Year (LTA): £16,693.52 (including IPT) for 2024/2025 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

The Town Council's current policy has been shared with Councillors to ensure they have all the information available to them. In addition, when assessing the Council's risks, it should be noted that it was agreed in 2011 that the Council would not insure the following:

- Larksmead palisade fencing
- Fencing at the Lamperd's Field compound
- Park Road play area fencing
- Railway Arches fencing
- Grit Bins

On the assumption there is no change, the total cost to the Town Council and Barnes for a Recreation Trust is **£16,693.52**.

Councillors will note that the Corn Exchange is currently insured by a separate insurance company, because the existing provider refused to insure it during the works.

It is important to note that changes may need to be made to the policy during the year which may increase the costs as extra equipment is purchased.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee makes a RECOMMENDATION to full Council that it:

- **Confirms there are no other aspects of insurance that they wish to amend.**
- **Agrees the insurance premium for 2025/26 of **£16,693.52** including taxes, subject to any changes the Council decides to make (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).**
- **Notes the ongoing policy with a separate contractor to cover the works to the Town Hall / Corn Exchange (expires November 2025).**

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th January 2025

£16,693.52 this was the current year's total and we await confirmation from the company for 2025/26.

Review of Asset Register

The full asset register is too large to distribute, however a summary sheet will be sent to Councillors.

The full asset register has a breakdown for each location and can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

Various members of staff updated the files in 2022 and the Mace Bearer was also involved by carrying out a full audit of the Town's Silver. Councillors will recall that this resulted in restating the asset figure on the AGAR.

The asset register is now updated regularly when items are purchased or disposed of.

This agenda item must be a recommendation to full council.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th January 2025

Review of Direct Debits

Company	Service/Supply	Frequency
Allstar Business Solutions Ltd	Fuel Card	Variable
Card Saver Ltd	Merchant Card Terminal	Monthly
Data Protection Register	Subscription	Annually
Dorset Council	Bin Rental & Waste Collections	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Bin Emptying at Elizabaeth Road Allotments	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Loss of Revenue of Car Parking due to Market	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Rates	10 Monthly
EE Ltd	Grd & Property Mgers & Charge-hand Mobile Phone	Monthly
EVO Payments	Transaction Charges for Card Receipts	Monthly
Environment Agency	Water extraction from bore hole	Annually
Fuel Card Services Ltd	Fuel Card	Monthly
Lloyds	Charge Card / Service Charge	Monthly
Glenmore Holdings Ltd	Quartley Management Charge for Glenmore Depot	Quarterly
Information Commission	Info Commission	Yearly
L.A.M.I.T	CCLA Property Fund Management Fee	Quarterly
Prime & Modern Ltd	IT contractor (previously G3)	Monthly
Quadient (was Neopost Ltd)	Franking re-fill	Variable
Sage	Payroll Cover	Annually
Sage	Accounts Cover	Annually
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Corn Exchange	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Park Road	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Woodhouse Garden	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Cemetery Workshop	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Marsh & Ham Toilets	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Cemetery Chapel	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Larksmead Pavilion	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Larksmead Floodlights	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric -Tabernacle Toilet	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Glenmore Depot	Monthly
PHS Group	Sanitary Disposal, Needle Disposal, hand dryers,Freshners	Annually
SW Comms	Telephone Lines & Calls	Monthly
Southern Electric	CCTV Electric	Quarterly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH	Gas - Corn Exchange	Monthly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH	Gas- Larksmead	Monthly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH	Gas- Woodhouse Gardens	Monthly
XCS	Photocopier charges	Monthly
water2business	Water Bill - Pavilion/ Cemetery	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Corn Exchange	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Park Road Recreation Ground - Pavillion	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Park Road - Old Public Toilets	Half Yearly
water2business	Water -Toilets Ham & Marsh Car Park	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Woodhouse Garden/ Tabernacle Toilet	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Glenmore Workshop	Half Yearly

To consider the current status of bad debts with the Town Council

The Town Council's Financial Regulations cover the process of managing and considering the writing off of bad debts. Section 9.4 states that:

Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year.

One invoice that has not yet been cleared is to Dorset Council for the use of Larskmead as a polling station in 2024. This is being dealt with by the RFO and the Town Clerk and Chairman of Council suggested getting in touch with the elections team who could confirm to the procurement team that it does require payment.

The Town Clerk has checked with the RFO and there are no other debts outstanding at this time and no action is required.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th January 2025

Free Venue Hire Update

Applications were received for 2024/2025 from the following people/organisations:

Continuing from their previous year's success, which is very worthwhile to local residents, as it offers uplifting indoor and outdoor activities and is dementia friendly, Sarah Rampton from "In Jolly Good Company" was awarded £389.94 in total of bookings for Woodhouse Gardens pavilion which has allowed them to have 21 sessions for the year. This covers their sessions from April 2024 to March 2025.

Livewell Dorset again applied to use Woodhouse Gardens to help deliver health and well-being appointments, because of the ability to divide the pavilion in two, they can send 2 people to deal with their patients privately. They were approved £296.56 which will allow them to hold 8 days, which took them up to October 2024.

Blandford Literary Festival asked for Free Hire of Woodhouse Gardens on the afternoon of 16th November 2024 and the morning and afternoon sessions of 17th November 2024 at a cost of £71.58. This year's festival utilised several venues and included lots of authors and events.

The Stour Valley Embroidery Project applied for the use of Woodhouse Gardens again as they still needed somewhere long enough to stretch out the panel they are working on. Six sessions were approved for June to October 2024 and another 6 sessions were then approved for October 2024 to March 2025 at a cost of £229.06 this is hoped to be the last request as it is close to completion.

This is a total of £987.14 in free hire at Woodhouse Gardens.

There were no requests from Artsreach or Sing Together as they use the Corn Exchange. Applications were received for 2023/2024 from the following people/organisations:

The Blandford Group Practice were granted venue hire for 3 times a year in 2022/2023 in the Corn Exchange for their very popular Wellbeing Walk-ins, this was extended to 2023/2024, they have only used 28th July 2023.

Continuing from their previous years success, which is very worthwhile to the local residents, Sarah Rampton from "In Jolly Good Company" was awarded £648 in total of bookings made for Woodhouse Gardens pavilion which has allowed them to have 2 sessions a month for the year. This covers their sessions from 24th April 2024 to 25th March 2025.

Blandford Yuletide Festival were approved Free Hire of the Corn Exchange on Friday 1st December and 1 session on the Saturday for this annual event, which involves the local church, schools, businesses, and residents.

Blandford Health Walks were granted 3 sessions for their meetings in the Council Chamber, they have 1 more session to use.

Hanover Court Residents Association were approved to use 10 sessions for the Community Room to enable them to start their new resident's association. They were advised to have their own public liability insurance and they have used 6 sessions to date.

Artsreach had a remainder left over from their £300 for 2022/2023 and asked if they could use it to bid for some events for the Corn Exchange from October to December but were unsuccessful this time.

Pathways for Victims Voices, Cathy Jacques, applied for use of the Community Room and was approved for 3 sessions and to have their own public liability insurance. Only 1 session has been used to date.

Blandford Opportunity Group asked for 1 session to hold a Teddy Bears picnic at Woodhouse Gardens pavilion and their request was approved.

Sing Together / Blandford Health Champions, asked for use of the Corn Exchange for a singing for wellbeing and tea party event.

Livewell Dorset applied to use Woodhouse Gardens to help deliver health and well-being appointments, because of the ability to divide the pavilion in two, they are able to send 2 people to deal with people privately. They were approved £300 which will allow them to hold 8 days, taking them up to the 4th December 2023.

Nov 2023/2024 The Stour Valley Embroidery Project applied for use of Woodhouse Gardens as they needed somewhere long enough to stretch out the panel they are working on. Six sessions were approved, with the last session finishing on 25th April 2024.

Please note that some of the latter applications, now use the month their application was approved to cover their requests rather than the financial year as approved. This change was approved at F&S on 6th September 2023.

Recommendation

Councillors are asked to note the report and continue their commitment to the free venue hire for applicants who provide so much for the Town.

Rachael Harding
Bookings Receptionist
8th January 2025

To review the Finance & Staffing Committee Remit and the Financial Regulations

The Finance & Staffing [Committee Remit](#) and the [Financial Regulations](#) can be viewed by clicking on the respective links.

The RFO has reviewed the Financial Regulations and after basic grammatical changes the main addition is as follows, to recognise the change to the petty cash process:

Addition at 6.20 (d) - Top up payments for petty cash should be taken from Market cash received in order to remove the need for a cheque to be signed and cash carried from the bank to the office. The removal of such cash must be recorded on the Daily Payments sheet and cross-referenced to the Petty Cash sheet it is offsetting.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee approves the amendment.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
27th February 2025

To approve the Investment Policy

The Investment Policy was updated in 2024 and agreed as follows:



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

INVESTMENT POLICY

Objective

The Town Council has an overall policy of obtaining the highest possible return bearing in mind the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return or yield. The Town Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. When balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Town Council will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested. The Town Council will avoid any unethical investments. The Town Council will not enter the stocks and shares market and will undertake a regular review of interest rates available for use by the council and when reserves are increased by more than £50,000 due to the disposal of assets.

Dependent upon the Town Council's financial situation bearing in mind the half yearly receipt of the precept, the amount of reserves held against forecasted expenditure and bearing in mind the overall financial situation regarding interest rates, consideration will be given to investing for a longer period than one month. Other than the above the RFO, Town Clerk and Chairman of Finance & Staffing Committee will, on behalf of the Town Council, review the capital investment on a monthly basis against production of a cashflow statement. The signatures of the above will be noted on the investment instruction and retrospective approval will be obtained at the next Finance & Staffing Committee meeting and minuted accordingly.

Negative Interest Rates

If the UK enters into a recession there is a small chance that the Bank of England could set it Bank Rate at or below zero. In this scenario, it is likely that this would feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. This situation already exists in many other European countries. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.

Strategy

Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Town Council aims to continue to further diversify into more secure and/or higher yielding asset classes. The majority of the Town Council's surplus cash is currently invested in Fixed Term Deposits and with CCLA's [Property Fund](#) or [Public Sector Deposit Fund](#).

The RFO will check with Lloyd's Bank, Hampshire Trust Bank, Cambridge & Counties and Santander on a regular basis for their money market rates and invest accordingly with the highest return bearing in mind the needs of the Council for availability of cash funds subject to a maximum of no more than 75% of the Town Council's cash investments being held by one

financial institution. Note that the Town Council will not apply this 75% rule during the financing of the Corn Exchange project.

The RFO will therefore look for the greatest return on any investment the Town Council makes, periodically seeking comparable prices with alternative financial institutions and if beneficial is authorised with the agreement of the Town Clerk and Chairman of the Finance & Staffing Committee to place funds subject to the approved counterparties. The RFO has delegated authority subject to market conditions and should be allowed to take immediate action to stabilise any financial position on behalf of the Council going through the Chairman of F & S, or if not available, the Vice Chairman of F & S and if neither available then through the Chairman of Council.

Approved counterparties

The Town Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in the table below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

Approved investment counterparties and limits

Credit Rating	Banks Unsecured	Banks Secured	Government	Corporates	Notes
AAA	£ 2m 5 Years	£ 2m 20 Years	£2m 50 Years	£1m 20 Years	
AA+	£ 2m 5 Years	£ 2m 10 Years	£2m 25 Years	£1m 10 Years	
AA	£ 2m 4 Years	£ 2m 5 Years	£2m 15 Years	£1m 10 Years	
AA-	£ 2m 3 Years	£ 2m 4 Years	£2m 10 Years	£1m 5 Years	
A+	£ 1m 2 Years	£ 1m 3 Years	£1m 5 Years	£1m 3 Years	
A	£ 1m 13 Months	£ 1m 2 Years	£1m 5 Years	£1m 2 Years	
A-	£1m 6 Months	£1m 13 Months	£1m 5 Years	£1m 13 months	
None	£0.5m 6 months	£0.5m 13 Months	£1m 5 Years	£1m 5 Years	On the discretion of Chairman of F & S & RFO

Credit Rating: Investment limits are set by reference to the lowest published long-term credit rating from Fitch, Moody's or Standard & Poor's. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

Banks Unsecured: Accounts, deposits, unsecured bonds with banks and building societies. other than multilateral development banks. A multilateral development bank (MDB) is an international financial institution chartered by two or more countries for the purpose of encouraging economic development). These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail.

Banks Secured: Covered Bonds, Fixed Term Deposits and other collateralised arrangements with banks and building societies. These investments are secured on the bank's assets, which limits the potential losses in the unlikely event of insolvency, and means that they are exempt from bail-in.

Government: Loans, bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by national governments, regional and local authorities and MDB's. These investments are not subject to bail-in and there is an insignificant risk of insolvency.

Corporates: Loans, bonds and Funds issued by companies other than banks. These investments are not subject to bail-ins but are exposed to the risk of the company going insolvent. These are to be monitored on a regular basis with a policy of when to re-claim the investment if the investment falls below a certain yield.

Approved at the Finance & Staffing Committee meeting held on 18th March 2024 and the Town Council meeting held on 25th March 2024.

T:\Policies, Regulations & Standing Orders\Policies\Investment Policy.doc

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee makes a recommendation to full council to approve the Investment Policy with any amendments.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th January 2025

To consider the virement of underspent reserves and the status of the General Reserves

Introduction

This agenda item provides the opportunity to review any budget underspends.

Detail of the Report

The RFO has reviewed the underspends and listed them as follows:

- Salaries	£32,000
- Telephones	£5,000
- Grants	£5,500
- Corn Exchange Rates	£15,147

However, Councillors should not consider any virement of the rates underspend because this is likely to be invoiced by the Dorset Council in due course.

The Salaries underspend is partly due to the lack of a committee clerk for the first five months of the financial year, and we also budget for the extra half a grounds person awaiting the Persimmon transfer, as in previous years.

Any other underspends are very minor and are likely to be taken up in cost for March.

Unforeseen costs that have recently been brought to our attention include a rates bill for Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion, which we have never been charged for to date. This has been confirmed at £2,150 per annum and has been entered on the rating list as from 1st April 2023. This means we are very likely to get a bill for 2023/24 and 2024/25 totalling £4,300 plus the rates for 2025/26 at £2,150 – giving a total of £6,450, none of which has been budgeted for. **It is therefore recommended that a budget line is introduced for Woodhouse Gardens Rates and £6,500 of the Salaries underspend is transferred to it.**

The Practitioners' Guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) recommends the General Reserve should be between 25% and 75% of the precept. Our precept for 2025/26 is £921,873. Therefore, the General Reserve should be between £230,468.25 and £691,404.75. It currently stands at £187,940.50 and we need £42,527.75 to bring us up to the 25% figure which, for a Town Council like Blandford Forum, is too low and as per the Internal Auditor and RFO recommendations over the years, the total should be nearer the 50% mark by adding £272,996. **It is therefore recommended that the remaining underspends from the items listed above are vired to the General Reserves.**

Any underspend from the Corn Exchange project can be brought back to the committee in December 2025 for consideration.

Recommendation

The recommendations are listed within the report, marked in bold.

Linda Scott-Giles Amanda Crocker
Town Clerk RFO
12th March 2025