

**BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting**

Held on Monday 29th September 2025 at 7:00pm in Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion



PRESENT

Cllr H Miéville – Chairman of Council
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr T Clarkson
Cllr S Morgan
Cllr G Del-Pinto
Cllr J Robinson

Cllr C Stevens – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr L Hitchings
Cllr A Cross
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr Y Miéville
Cllr S Chapman
Cllr M Putt

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Marian Matthews (resident)

Operations Manager
Resident (accompanying Marian Matthews)

56. PUBLIC SESSION

Resident Marian Matthews is concerned about the lack of emergency planning for Blandford Forum at the Town Council level. She feels that organised help, such as preparing for safe clean drinking water and emergency basics, is necessary. She emphasised that Russian drones target areas that could impact on us, which could be a cyber attack, and feels everyone should be aware that they should be prepared. The Chairman asked Councillors to think about these points and contact him with ideas.

ACTION: TOWN COUNCILLORS

57. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Cllr Lacey-Clarke reported that the Archbishop Wake Primary School is taking on the running of the adjacent nursery, which will be renamed as a result, and the Trust is well-placed to deliver this service to the community.

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is going to run again.

Door to door tradesmen tend to carry out leaflet dropping at this time of year and awareness is being raised that some are malicious scams.

Salisbury Road has been resurfaced and the line painting is due to be completed imminently.

The two Dorset Council consultations for the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan have deadlines of 13th October 2025.

58. APOLOGIES

None

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

Cllr Del-Pinto advised that she is working with the Literary Festival via the Rotary Club, which is also providing some funding for the Festival.

Cllrs Lacey-Clarke and Quayle advised that they will not vote on the Marsh & Ham toilet/TIC building agenda item, which is owned by the Dorset Council.

60. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 28th JULY 2025

Cllr Lacey-Clarke requested two amendments to the minutes which have been made and Nicci Brown was not present at the meeting, which has also been updated

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED (13 in favour, 2 abstentions/non-votes) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED, subject to the two amendments above.

61. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

DAPTC – The DAPTC has written encouraging councils to make sure they are present on 30th October 2025 at the cllr/clerk event at the George Albert Hotel. Cllrs H Mieville and Stevens have agreed to attend to represent the Town Council. The Town Clerk and Committee Clerk were booked to attend but needed to cancel it due to the delay in the Corn Exchange project. The DAPTC says it will be a key moment for Parish and Town Councils across Dorset to come together and explore the future of local governance, service delivery, and community leadership in the context of devolution. The new Dorset Council Chief Executive will be present, along with the Leader.

Accounts – The RFO was reviewing the incoming costs for the Skatefest and how it is treated in the accounts. As Councillors may be aware, the budget is currently held in R&A Reserves then, as the income and expenditure comes in, it is posted to the nominal ledger via the profit and loss account. The RFO then journals each item to the reserve account via the 'Transfer to Reserves' account on the Balance Sheet. The RFO has made the point that, unless there is a reason for having to do it this way, it would be more accurate and easier to track, if income and expense accounts are set up in the profit and loss ledger. The budget is set and used each year so the annual budget would be put to the P&L account as with all the other budgets. At the end of the year, any profit or loss could be transferred to the Reserve account to be used in future years to offset any losses. All the other EMRs set aside at the time of budgeting are to build up reserves ready for future expenditure. The Skatefest 'reserve' is always for an event due to take place in the current financial year and is expected to be spent during that year so, it is not a reserve budget. This is also true of the 'reserve' budget set aside each year in T&GP for Christmas lights. Hence, this matter was raised with the Committee Chairman and he understood the issue and agreed with the RFO's request to manage these differently due to their nature.

Staff Pay – The Local Government Pay Claim 2025/26 was approved and included in August's pay run.

Manual Handling – All staff carried out manual handling training on 30th July 2025.

Sexual Harassment Prevention – The Town Clerk delivered this training to her staff on 18th September and has shared the link for Councillors to watch in their own time.

62. CIVIC REPORT

The paper was distributed to Councillors via email prior to the meeting (see Appendix B).

63. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

63.1 RECREATION & AMENITIES MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2025

63.1.1 Recommendations

None

63.1.2 The Minutes were RECEIVED.

64. FINANCE & STAFFING AGENDA ITEMS (MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2025 CANCELLED)

64.1 ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR:

64.1.1 Administration Budget for the year to 31st August 2025

The paper was noted (see Appendix C).

64.1.2 Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 31st August 2025

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

64.1.3 Reserves Accounts as at 31st August 2025

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

64.2. REVIEW OF FINANCE DOCUMENTATION

**64.2.1 To receive and retrospectively approve the Petty Cash Transfers from banking PC2 – 4
TALLING £282.17**

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

The petty cash transfers from banking PC2 – 4 totalling £282.17 are received and retrospectively approved.

64.2.2 To receive and retrospectively approve direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2025 to 31st August 2025 (sheets 220 - 223) totalling £134,102.64

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

The direct debit payments for the period 1st May 2025 to 31st August 2025 (sheets 220 - 223) totalling £134,102.64 are received and retrospectively approved.

**64.2.3 To receive and retrospectively approve Online Faster Payments FP298 to FP312 totalling
£181,340.97**

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

Online Faster Payments FP298 to FP312 totalling £181,340.97 are received and retrospectively approved.

64.2.4 Online Corn Exchange Faster Payments CE046 – CE064 totalling £1,509,823.30

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

Online Corn Exchange Faster Payments CE046 – CE064 totalling £1,509,823.30 are received and retrospectively approved.

64.2.5 Investment Account for the period to 31st August 2025

The paper was noted (see Appendix D).

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

The investment accounts are approved for the period.

64.2.6 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash checks

Cllr L Hitchings confirmed that he has seen the bank reconciliations and has carried out a check on the petty cash, which balanced perfectly.

64.2.7 Bank Reconciliation to 31st August 2025

The paper was noted (see Appendix E).

65. TO DECIDE ON A WAY FORWARD WITH REPAIRS TO THE CHARTER 400 MOSAIC

The paper was noted (see Appendix F).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (10 in favour, 5 abstentions) that

The Town Council is minded to select Option 1 for the Charter 400 mosaic and asks officers to seek a further two quotes and asks H&W for a contribution, bringing it back to council in due course (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

66. TO CONSIDER A GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE BLANDFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

The paper was noted (see Appendix G).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr H Miéville, SECONDED by Cllr Putt and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 against) that

The Town Council approves a grant of up to £300 / up to two author fees for the Blandford Literary Festival, using the Grants budget upon receipt of invoices, subject to those events being free of charge (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

67. TO CONSIDER EXPENDITURE FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AT WOODHOUSE GARDENS

The paper was noted (see Appendix H).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Holmes, SECONDED by Cllr Robinson and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council selects Company B / Option 2 for Woodhouse Gardens at a cost of £2,695 for Christmas lights and a Nutcracker tree, using the Christmas Lights budget and taking the balance from Town Improvements (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

68. TO AGREE ON A RESPONSE TO A DAPTC SURVEY ABOUT UNDERSTANDING PRIORITIES FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

The paper was noted (see Appendix I).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr S Hitchings but NOT AGREED unanimously that the Town Council responds confirming that Scenario 2 is the most relevant for Blandford Forum Town Council, providing context to the response that this is due to the four assets/services currently awaiting transfer. Any additional assets/services would need to be considered separately.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Quayle and AGREED (12 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council responds confirming that Scenario 3 is the most relevant for Blandford Forum Town Council, providing context to the response that this is due to the four assets/services currently awaiting transfer. Any additional assets/services would need to be considered separately.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

69. TO CONSIDER QUOTES FOR ANNUAL SERVICE CHARGE FOR THE TOWN'S CCTV SYSTEM

The paper was noted (see Appendix J).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 abstention) that

Councillors select Company B to provide a maintenance contract for the Town Centre CCTV at a cost of £1,830 on a rolling 12-month agreement using funds from the CCTV maintenance budget 5020, which has a balance of £2,625 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8). Councillors also requested that the Police provide feedback as to how valuable the system is to the force, and any statistics they hold to support their views.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

70. TO CONSIDER QUOTES FOR HR AND H&S COVER FOR THE TOWN COUNCIL

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Miéville and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 abstention) that

Councillors select Company A to provide both HR and H&S cover for the Town Council at a cost of £385.67 for a 60 month period (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

71. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR STAFF HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix K).

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

Councillors retrospectively approve expenditure of up to £1,260 using funds from the Staff training and travel expenses which has £2,667 remaining and officers are asked not to bring this item back for approval as it can be an ongoing approved cost (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

72. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR ASBESTOS REMOVAL AT THE FOOTBALL PAVILION

The paper was noted (see Appendix M) and the item was deferred to the next agenda once quotations have been received.

73. TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE HEADS OF TERMS FOR THE FREEHOLD TRANSFER OF THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE BUILDING AT MARSH AND HAM CAR PARK

The paper was noted (see Appendix N).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr H Miéville and AGREED (13 in favour, 2 abstentions) that

The Town Council approves the Heads of Terms and expenditure authority for associated legal costs (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8). Officers will seek quotes for the necessary refurbishment for the toilets once the transfer is complete.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

74. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND CONSIDER ANY REQUESTS REGARDING THE:

74.1 Neighbourhood Plan – Blandford + Monitoring Group

The paper was noted (see Appendix O).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED (14 in favour, 1 abstention) that

The Town Council acknowledges the B+ Neighbourhood Plan Group will submit its own response to the Dorset Council consultations without referring back to this council.

74.2 BFTC Commemoration Group

Cllr Cross updated Councillors on the group's recent activity.

74.3 Climate Change & Biodiversity

Nothing to report.

74.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project

Cllr Stevens updated members on the last working group meeting and advised that Councillors are asked to submit their proposals to the Town Clerk in advance of the next Town Council meeting.

75. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

None

76. CONFIDENTIAL

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

76.1 Town Clerk's Report

Nothing to report.

76.2 To consider a nomination for Freeman of Blandford Forum (Stage 2) (papers distributed prior to the 28th July 2025 meeting)

It was PROPOSED by Cllr H Miéville, SECONDED by Cllr Stevens and AGREED (10 in favour, 5 against) that

The Town Council suspends Standing Orders to allow for a written ballot to take place.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Cross but **NOT AGREED** that the Town Council awards the Freedom of the Town to the nominee.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Chapmann, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED that the Standing Orders are **REINSTATED**.

76.3 CONFIDENTIAL (cont.)

- 76.3 To receive a report regarding the Town Council's staffing and workload, and to consider retrospective expenditure authority and a request for the 2026-2027 budget (paper sent to Councillors only on 18th September 2025 and verbal report at the meeting)

The paper was noted (see Appendix P).

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr S Hitchings and AGREED (12 in favour, 3 abstentions) that

The hours for the role are reinstated from 1st October 2025 as per the report.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Chapman and AGREED (12 in favour, 3 abstentions) that

Amendments to the role are approved and noted as per the report.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

9:04pm – Cllr Quayle left the meeting.

Cllr Lacey-Clarke requested a recorded vote. It was PROPOSED by Cllr Chapman, SECONDED by Cllr Holmes and AGREED that

Expenditure for an agreement is retrospectively approved (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

**Cllr H Miéville – In favour
Cllr Stevens – In favour
Cllr Cross – In favour
Cllr Holmes – In favour
Cllr S Hitchings – In favour
Cllr Y Miéville – In favour
Cllr L Hitchings – In favour
Cllr Clarkson – In favour
Cllr Putt – In favour
Cllr Chapman – In favour
Cllr Morgan – Abstention
Cllr Robinson – Abstention
Cllr Del-Pinto – Abstention
Cllr Lacey-Clarke – Abstention**

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke and AGREED unanimously that

The Town Council approves retrospective expenditure authority for external consultancy fees of £8,267 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

The meeting closed at 9:08pm.

SIGNED

DATED