BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Corn Exchange Meeting
Held on Monday 20th October 2025 at 7:00pm in Woodhouse Gardens Pavilion

DRAFT Subject to confirmation

PRESENT

Cllr S Hitchings – Committee Chairman
Cllr H Miéville – Chairman of Council
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr T Clarkson
Cllr S Morgan (arrived 7:04pm)
Cllr Y Miéville
Cllr G Del-Pinto
Cllr A Cross – Committee Vice Chairman
Cllr C Stevens – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr S Chapman
Cllr R Holmes
Cllr M Putt

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk
Liz Rawlings
Anna Hayball
Operations Manager
Peter Aldous
Members of the public x 2

IN ATTENDANCE (VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS)

Nicci Brown
Cllr L Hitchings

17. PUBLIC SESSION

Peter Aldous was in attendance to speak about speed limits in the town. He said most of the villages have now got 20mph speed limits but the town doesn't, apart from a stretch on East Street. The Higher Shaftesbury Lane is still 40mph and he suggested that should be a 30mph limit. Liz Rawlings, also in attendance, supported this comment and Cllr Holmes did too and explained that requests have previously been made for a reduction there. The Chairman thanked the residents for their feedback and invited the Dorset Councillors to comment. Cllr Lacey-Clarke informed attendees that there needs to be regular logging of near misses to evidence, and provide reasoning, to reduce the speed limit. He added that there is also a 20mph zone up by the school and suggested setting up a neighbourhood speed watch, which could be used to collect more data. Anna Hayball reminded Councillors of a fatal accident in Shaftesbury Lane some years ago and Cllr Lacey-Clarke stated that it had been investigated and was proven not to be speed related.

18. APOLOGIES

Cllr L Hitchings (in attendance via Microsoft Teams) Cllr J Robinson

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

None

20. MINUTES OF THE CORN EXCHANGE MEETING HELD ON 21ST JULY 2025

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Cross, SECONDED by Cllr H Miéville and AGREED (11 in favour, 2 non-votes/abstentions) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

21. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

Thanks! – With the building being handed back to us on 20th October 2025, it feels right to extend a heartfelt thanks to all the staff who have been involved in the corn exchange project. It has had an impact on all of them at some point during the project and this has been in addition to their normal workload.

21. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (CONT.)

Teamwork has been a vital part of the project, and we are very fortunate to have such a committed and dedicated team, all with the same goal of seeing this project through for the benefit of the town and its community. We still have lots to do over the next few weeks, but the Town Clerk is confident we will be able to accomplish this as a team.

Temporary member of staff – Councillors will be aware that one of the caretaking team has not been fit for work and with the reopening of the building fast approaching one of the construction team has been offered a temporary position after checking with our HR advisors. He will help reinstate the building and cover caretaking shifts for a three-month period from 20th October 2025. line managers are satisfied that this person would be effective in post and have carried out the usual recruitment/onboarding checks.

Pictures – During the M&E handover, the Town Clerk asked the contractor if we could make use of the mobile scaffolding in the town hall for hanging the pictures and this has been approved and was arranged for 13th October 2025.

Ramp – A site meeting is being held on Tuesday 14th October with a local company to quote for the ramp for people to use from the stage left to the changing room.

Wi-Fi in the Corn Exchange – the town clerk approached Cllr I Hitchings for his view on reintroducing Wi-Fi to the building for the offices through to the corn exchange and town hall due to his expertise on the matter. A site meeting was held on Monday 6th October 2025 with the it company and the town clerk sought quotes for the broadband, which ranged from £305 for a leased line over a three-year contract, and £55 for a SoGEA line over three years. After numerous emails and discussions internally and to two companies, Cllr I Hitchings suggested approaching a fibre company direct and a business account has been set up for £62.49 a month for a year's agreement, which provides us with enough performance without having to go to the leased line. However, if it doesn't do what we want, we could consider moving to a leased line.

The National Lottery Community Fund – The Town Clerk is pleased to confirm the grant application for the stage curtains totalling £9,031 has been successful from TNL community fund. This makes a total of £1,146,121 in grants and s106 funding applied for and administered during the term of the project and the funders have all been sent regular updates on the project throughout the 19 months. The Town Council's accrued funds totalled a separate £1,071,500 and the loan was for £1.3m.

Meetings – On 24th October 2025, the Georgian Group will be visiting the Royal Coat of Arms in the Town Hall and the Dorset council registrar team will be visiting all the rooms for the purpose of licensing the venue for civil ceremonies. The BBC radio 4 engineer is also due to visit that day, subject to the broadband line being installed successfully the day before.

Dorset Clerks – At the last SLCC Dorset branch meeting of clerks across the county, the Gillingham town clerk asked if it would be possible for the Blandford Forum town clerk to host a meeting in the corn exchange. This has been arranged for Tuesday 9th December 2025.

Furniture – The tables and chairs are being delivered on 20th and 22nd October 2025.

Tile Sponsorship Scheme – The funders have all been provided with an update and offered their name or organisation's name to be included in the list of tile sponsorship due to their existing contribution, so it is recognised they funded the project in some way. To date, 70 tiles have been purchased.

Silent Disco – A meeting has been arranged with a student from The Blandford School who would like to organise a silent disco on Saturday 13th December 2025.

21. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (CONT.)

Flowers and Plants – A meeting has been held with Sweetpea florists and Crawford Ferns for plants to go within the fireplaces in the Corn Exchange and upstairs in the Town Hall and plants to be positioned on the Corn Exchange stage.

Clocks – The horologist visited last week to discuss works to the Town Hall clock and the façade clock.

Information Display Boards – A presentation is being prepared for the big screen and will also be printed for display stands purchased to show some information about each room including the history and what has been done during the refurbishment.

22. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON EVENTS AND BOOKINGS

The paper was noted (see Appendix B).

Cllr Cross suggested approaching Mark Steel, who is a BBC presenter about performing in the Corn Exchange.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Opening Event on Sunday 30th November 2025 and Transfers

Cllr S Hitchings updated Councillors on the financial summary report provided by the RFO.

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

Councillors approve expenditure between £2,000 and £5,000 for an opening event on Sunday 30th November 2025 (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8) and the following transfers for the remainder of the project expenditure:

- **Transfer £6,000 from NL code 1115 to 1110 and leave the balance in 1115 for now.**
- **1104 Corn Exchange S106 £85,277.06 transferred to 1105 = £0.00**
- **1105 Corn Exchange Capital Project -£60,727.36 plus transfer from the following 1104 £85,277.06, 1116 £192,379.97, 1120 £79,000 and 1122 £103,292.81 = £399,222.48**
- **1110 Corn Exchange Promotion Group £708.11 plus transfer from 1115 = £6,708.11**
- **1115 Corn Exchange Project Development £183,928.83. Transfer £6,000 to 1110 = £177,928.83**
- **1116 Corn Exchange HLF Stage 1 £192,379.97 transferred to 1105 = £0.00**
- **1117 Corn Exchange PWLB repayments £216,511.80 - No change.**
- **1120 Corn Exchange Venues Refurbishment £79,000.00 transferred to 1105 = £0.00**
- **1122 Corn Exchange Community Hall S106 £103,292.81 transferred to 1105 = £0.00**
- **Transfer 1115 once 1105 is overspent for a second time.**

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The meeting closed at 7:37pm.

SIGNED …… DATED ……..……