



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

To: All Members of the Finance & Staffing Committee
(Cllr L Hitchings, Cllr C Stevens, Cllr M Putt, Cllr H Miéville, Cllr R Holmes, Cllr S Hitchings, Cllr S Chapman, Cllr A Cross and Cllr T Clarkson)

Dear Member,

FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE – CONFIDENTIAL MEETING

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee to be held in the **Council Chamber**, Market Place, Blandford Forum DT11 7AF on **Wednesday 28th January 2026 at 11:00am** to consider the following items.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
21st January 2026

A G E N D A

The exclusion of press and public is essential for confidentiality (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960).

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.

1. Apologies
2. To receive an update from the Town Council's HR advisors on shortlisting applications and note the protected characteristics
3. To review and shortlist the applications for the position of Town Clerk
4. To receive and confirm interview questions for the interview panel
5. To confirm delegated authority to the interview panel to recommend the appointment at the full council meeting held on 9th February 2026

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



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To receive an update from the Town Council's HR advisors on shortlisting applications and note the protected characteristics

Prior to advertising the role in public, and assuming numerous suitable applications would be received, the Town Clerk enquired with the council's HR advisors if all candidates with CiLCA and relevant qualifications/experience had to be offered an interview. This is partly due to the time constraints of gathering staff and Councillors for two days for interviews.

The HR advisors responded to say that no, not all suitably qualified and experienced individuals have to be offered an interview if numerous applications are received and there are others who can evidence more experience or relevance to the role.

The committee is reminded of the nine protected characteristics (UK Equality Act 2010):

- **Age:** Protection against discrimination based on a person's age.
- **Disability:** Protection for people with physical or mental impairments.
- **Gender Reassignment:** Protection for people transitioning or who have transitioned gender.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** Protection for those who are married or in a civil partnership.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** Protection for women who are pregnant or have recently given birth.
- **Race:** Protection based on colour, nationality, ethnic, or national origin.
- **Religion or Belief:** Protection for people with certain religions or philosophical beliefs.
- **Sex:** Protection for being male or female.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Protection for being gay, straight, bisexual, etc.

Key Points:

- Unlawful treatment can include direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- The Act also offers protection against discrimination by association, meaning you're protected if someone close to you has a protected characteristic.
- To create a fairer society and workplace, ensuring everyone has equal opportunities and is treated with dignity.

It is recommended that the Committee notes this report.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
20th January 2026

To review and shortlist the applications for the position of Town Clerk

The Town Council has confirmed that the Finance & Staffing committee will shortlist applications for the position of Town Clerk. Those candidates will then be invited by the Town Clerk to an interview, which will consist of a presentation to all staff and Councillors, an interview carried out by the panel of Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council and the Chairman of this committee, and it is suggested they also receive a tour of the office before they leave.

The applications will be presented to the committee at Noon on 28th January 2026 and the shortlisting will be carried out in conjunction with the Person Specification provided to all applicants. The shortlisting document is provided below at [Appendix A](#).

The agenda confirming the appointment of the Proper Officer to the council will be distributed on 3rd February 2026 and the meeting will be held on 9th February 2026 at 7pm.

Process

- The committee will review all applications received, bearing in mind the importance that all personal data is handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Personal details of applicants must not be recorded or published in public minutes. Hence candidates have been numbered and will be listed in the minutes by number, not names.
- Applications will be assessed against the agreed [person specification and criteria](#).
- The committee will agree a minimum score to be invited for an interview (suggested is 40 from Essential criterion shown in green and six from Desirable) before the process starts. Panel members score independently, then agree a final score.
- Clerk to invite shortlisted candidates to interview and inform them of process, scoring sheets, etc. (referred to below).

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
20th January 2026

Appendix A

Shortlisting Document

Score each criterion from **0–2**

Scoring Scale

- **0 – No evidence:** Does not meet the criterion
- **1 – Limited / Good evidence:** Minimal relevance / partially meets the criterion
- **2 – Excellent evidence:** Extensive, highly relevant experience, meets the criterion

| Criteria | Type | Score (0-2) | Evidence (Application/Interview) |
|---|-----------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| CiLCA qualification (inc. GPC) | Desirable | | |
| Degree or equivalent | Desirable | | |
| Other relevant recognised professional qualification | Desirable | | |
| Experience of local government administration | Essential | | |
| Strong knowledge of local government law, finance, and governance | Essential | | |
| Excellent organisational, communication, and leadership skills | Essential | | |
| Ability to work independently and advise elected members professionally | Essential | | |
| Previous experience as a Town or Parish Clerk | Desirable | | |
| Experience as a Responsible Financial Officer | Desirable | | |
| Knowledge of local government structure and practices | Essential | | |
| Able to provide continuation of use of GPC | Essential | | |
| Understanding of employment law | Essential | | |
| Management of people, assets, resources, and team development | Essential | | |
| Commercial knowledge (e.g. building regeneration) | Desirable | | |
| Knowledge of Health and Safety policies/practice | Essential | | |
| Project management (results to timescale/budget) | Essential | | |
| Committee administration and minute-taking | Desirable | | |
| Management of land, buildings, and resources | Essential | | |
| Research and timely action on relevant information | Essential | | |
| Financial resource planning and budgetary control | Essential | | |
| Positive attitude to challenges/problems | Essential | | |
| Effective, confident, and sensitive communication | Essential | | |
| Mature judgement, discretion, and confidentiality | Essential | | |

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| Integrity and professionalism | Essential | | |
| Commitment to implementing Council policies | Essential | | |
| Interest in planning | Essential | | |
| Proactive, opportunity/risk identification, prioritisation | Essential | | |
| Flexible, effective work with community organisations | Essential | | |
| Evidence of CPD and willingness to train | Essential | | |
| Can-do approach to resource use | Essential | | |
| High standards of integrity/confidentiality | Essential | | |
| Professional, impartial, politically neutral | Essential | | |
| Strong attention to detail | Essential | | |
| Ability to manage competing priorities/deadlines | Essential | | |
| Experience of community engagement | Essential | | |
| Relationship building with staff, partners, authorities | Essential | | |
| Heart for public service | Essential | | |
| Experience with community groups/volunteers | Desirable | | |
| Leadership in change management | Essential | | |
| Teamwork and ad hoc support | Essential | | |
| Enthusiasm and team contribution | Essential | | |
| Constructive criticism and improvement | Essential | | |
| Leadership to employees, Members, community | Essential | | |
| Proactive/confident IT use, website, social media | Essential | | |
| Good IT skills, MS Office | Essential | | |
| Website updating or willingness to learn | Desirable | | |
| Flexible hours (evenings/weekends) | Essential | | |
| Willingness for training/CPD | Essential | | |
| Full driving licence and own vehicle | Essential | | |
| PR and media | Desirable | | |
| Planning | Desirable | | |
| External funding/grants | Desirable | | |
| Freedom of Information requests | Desirable | | |
| TOTAL: | | | |

Interview level is at least 40 from Essential (one point for each Essential criterion) and six for Desirable

To receive and confirm interview questions for the interview panel

The following questions at [Appendix B](#) have been compiled from other councils, existing questions from this council and a little extra input from ChatGPT. The committee is asked to approve the list or suggest any amendments before approval. These questions will then be printed for each candidate ready for the interviews on 4th and 5th February 2026.

A [form has also been designed](#) for the staff and Councillors who come along to the presentations, for committee approval. The panel can then consider their feedback upon deliberating. This should be shared with the candidates in advance, so they can understand how the scoring process will work.

The committee also needs to confirm the process and timings for 4th and 5th February 2026. For example, the following is proposed based on shortlisting six candidates:

| Wednesday 4 th February 2026 | | | Thursday 5 th February 2026 | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Candidate 1 | Candidate 2 | Candidate 3 | Candidate 4 | Candidate 5 | Candidate 6 | Deliberations and Decision |
| 9:30am – Presentation | 11:30am – Presentation | 1:30pm – Presentation | 9:30am – Presentation | 11:30am – Presentation | 1:30pm – Presentation | 4pm – 5pm Panel to consider all the candidates and confirm its decision. |
| 10:15am – Interview | 12:15am – Interview | 2:15pm – Interview | 10:15am – Interview | 10:15am – Interview | 2:15pm – Interview | Thursday 5 th February / Friday 6 th February 2026 Chairman of Council to contact the successful candidate. |
| 11:15am – Tour of offices | 1:15pm – Tour of offices | 3:15pm – Tour of offices | 11:15am – Tour of offices | 11am – Tour of offices | 3:15pm – Tour of offices | Friday 6 th February 2026 Town Clerk to prepare the paperwork for the Chairman of Council. |

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
20th January 2026

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW FOR THE POSITION OF TOWN CLERK

4th – 5th February 2026

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|------------------------|--|
| Interview Date: | Wednesday 4 th February 2026 / Thursday 5 th February 2026 |
| Interview Time: | |
| Name: | |

| Section | Questions | Score 1= Poor 5= Good |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Background & Understanding of the Role <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you briefly describe your experience working with local councils or similar public bodies?• What do you see as the key responsibilities of a Town Clerk?• What attracted you to this position with our town council?• How do you stay up to date with changes in local government legislation and best practice? | |
| 2 | Governance, Law & Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What experience do you have with local government law, standing orders, and council procedures? | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you ensure the council remains compliant with statutory duties and deadlines? • Can you give an example of when you advised councillors on a governance or legal matter? • How would you handle a situation where a council decision may be unlawful or procedurally incorrect? | |
| 3 | <p>Council Meetings & Democratic Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do (or would) you prepare for council and committee meetings? • What is your approach to minute-taking and ensuring decisions are accurately recorded? • How would you manage challenging or contentious meetings? • How do (or would) you support both the Chair/Mayor and councillors in their roles? | |
| 4 | <p>Finance & Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What experience do you have with council budgets, precepts, or financial reporting? | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you ensure strong financial controls and transparency? • Have you worked with auditors before? What was your role? • How do you manage competing priorities and deadlines? | |
| 5 | <p>Leadership & Staff Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What experience do you have managing staff or contractors? • How do you approach performance management and staff development? • How would you handle conflict within the staff team or between councillors and staff? | |
| 6 | <p>Community Engagement & External Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you balance the needs of councillors, residents, and external partners? • What experience do you have dealing with members of the public, including complaints? | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you support the council's relationship with the police, unitary authority, neighbouring parishes, or community groups? • How do you promote openness and accessibility in council operations? | |
| 7 | <p>Scenario-Based Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A councillor asks you to carry out an action you believe is outside the council's powers. What would you do? • A member of the public is unhappy with a council decision and becomes confrontational. How would you respond? • There has been damage to council property and strong public concern. What would be your role in managing the situation? • If councillors disagree strongly on an issue, how do you maintain neutrality? | |
| 8 | <p>Organisation, Ethics & Personal Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure confidentiality while also supporting transparency? | |

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|---|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you manage pressure and high workloads? • What would you say are (or would be) your greatest strengths as a Town Clerk? • Is there an area of the role you are still developing, and how are you addressing it? • There are numerous evening and weekend meetings and events. Are you able to commit to these? • How do you feel about continuing the tradition of civic and remembrance events? | |
| 9 | <p>Closing Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be your priorities in the first six months of the role? • What support would you need from the council to be successful? • If we did offer you the job how soon would you be able to start? • And would you be able to come in during April to have some handover sessions with Linda? | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role details are contained in the Job Description, which you will have seen. All staff start at the bottom of the pay scale and progress up in addition to the national annual increments.• Do you have any questions for us? | |
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Form for Staff / Councillors

Candidate Presentations

Candidates were informed at application stage that: *All candidates invited to interview will be required to deliver a 15-minute presentation to all Councillors and staff on maximising usage of the Corn Exchange complex and the proposed pedestrianisation of the market area outside the buildings to the west of the Corn Exchange. Information on the background of these projects and minutes of relevant meetings can be found on the Town Council's website: www.blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk.*

They were then offered an interview and reminded of the above, with the addition of the scoring sheet below.

The scoring and comments below will be provided to the interview panel and may be seen by the candidate.

| Assessor Name: | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|---|---|----------------|
| Candidate No. | Content & Insight (25%) What they say <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accuracy and relevance to the prompt• Depth of analysis and originality• Clear takeaway or recommendation• Evidence, data, or examples used appropriately• Understanding of BFTC Score indicators 1 = Superficial, unclear, or off-topic 3 = Competent but conventional 5 = Insightful, well-structured, adds value | Structure & Clarity (25%) How well it's organised <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear introduction and objective• Logical flow between sections• Strong conclusion / summary• Easy to follow without confusion Score indicators 1 = Disorganized, hard to follow 3 = Mostly clear with minor gaps 5 = Very clear, persuasive narrative | Communication & Delivery (25%) How it's delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confidence and professionalism• Voice, pacing, clarity, tone• Eye contact and body language (or virtual equivalent)• Ability to explain complex ideas simply Score indicators 1 = Hard to hear, nervous, disengaging 3 = Clear but somewhat flat or rushed 5 = Engaging, confident, polished | Visuals & Materials (25%) Slides or supporting materials <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visually clear and professional• Not text-heavy• Supports (not distracts from) the message• Correct use of charts/graphics Score indicators 1 = Cluttered or confusing 3 = Adequate but uninspiring 5 = Clean, impactful, well-aligned | Comments for qualitative feedback (optional) | Totals: |
| Candidate 1 | | | | | | |

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| Candidate 2 | | | | | | |
| Candidate 3 | | | | | | |
| Candidate 4 | | | | | | |
| Candidate 5 | | | | | | |
| Candidate 6 | | | | | | |