

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
Held on Monday 23rd February 2026 at 7:00pm in the Corn Exchange



PRESENT

Cllr H Miéville – Chairman of Council
Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr N Lacey-Clarke
Cllr A Cross
Cllr B Quayle
Cllr S Morgan
Cllr G Del Pinto

Cllr C Stevens – Vice Chairman of Council
Cllr Y Miéville
Cllr S Chapman
Cllr M Putt
Cllr T Clarkson
Cllr M Spruce

IN ATTENDANCE

Committee Clerk
Cllr L Hitchings (via Microsoft Teams)
Nicci Brown (via Microsoft Teams)

Operations Manager
Claire Commons (via Microsoft Teams)

148. PUBLIC SESSION

None

149. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Lacey-Clarke discussed the SEN gasworks replacement work that is happening in White Cliff Mill Street. Originally, SGN were confident that they would only have to close the entrance to Park Road. Upon excavating they realized they couldn't, and they have had to close off Park Road for the shortest time possible. This will be manned 24/7, however Councillor Lacey-Clarke will check that this is happening. Having direct contact with SEN has been very positive. When the forthcoming road closure on White Cliff Mill Street begins, access to it may become more difficult, Cllr Lacey-Clarke and Cllr Quayle have requested a meeting on Day 1 of this work to ensure the closure has been put in before the turning for Bryanston Street and to make sure it is manned and access is only available for residents.

In reference to the recent flooding response from Dorset Council, learning can be taken from it and improved in the future. At the Dorset Council meeting Cllr Lacey-Clarke requested it be brought to scrutiny and in May 2026 a meeting will be held look at the flood response in Blandford.

The first outcome of the Citizens Climate Panel, a representative panel of 20 selected people across Dorset representing different backgrounds. They came forward with their recommendations to help create a new resilience plan, flooding was also touched upon, Cllr Lacey-Clarke will keep us updated on the response from this. In the case of an emergency response Dorset Council's priority is to attend the emergency, which can be frustrating, however if a case occurs like this again, please do contact your Dorset Council Councillors as your first port of call.

The issue of the missing Bollard in the center of town has been reported to Highways and Dorset Police has CCTV of the culprit.

Cllr Spruce asked how we are communicating the road closure information with the surgery. Cllr Lacey-Clarke explained that face to face meetings have been had, if there are any issues with the gas supply the surgery will be informed beforehand. The switch over is scheduled to happen when the surgery is closed and are they are actively involved in the planning.

149. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS (cont.)

Cllr Cross asked how long they anticipate that the access issues into White Cliff Gardens and will here still be access on the new one-way system from Milldown Road to the Scout Hut for weekly meetings of the railway club. Cllr Lacey-Clarke explained that resident's access will remain throughout. The road blockage will be from Eagle House Surgery down to Salisbury Street. It should be a 2-week closure, unless any unforeseen problems occur.

150. APOLOGIES

Cllr J Robinson
Cllr L Hitchings

Cllr R Holmes

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

Cllr Clarkson and Cllr Quayle stated that they will not participate in voting on the Agenda Item 9 , because they are members of the Royal British Legion they will leave the room.

152. MINUTES OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON:

152.1 Monday 26th January 2026

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Clarkson, SECONDED by Cllr Cross and AGREED unanimously that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

152.2 Monday 9th February 2026

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Putt, SECONDED by Cllr Spruce and AGREED (12 in favour, 1 non-vote) that the Minutes be APPROVED and SIGNED.

153. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The paper was noted (see Appendix A).

Updating Valuations for Insurance Purposes – The RFO is seeking updated quotes for the insurance cover and has advised that all the buildings need to be revalued having last been undertaken in 2019. This can be done via desktop analysis by Benchmark (Benchmark - The desk-based eValuation service - BCH) at a cost of £90 a property, excluding listed buildings. The listed buildings will have to be done separately by a qualified surveyor. The building sum insured for the cemetery chapel does not appear to include the gateway and access wall. This is deemed part of the listed building by Historic England and should be included. We therefore need to have this valued to ensure the whole site is covered.

Terrorism cover is recommended – a separate quote has been requested now we are holding events, even though we are not hitting the 800 attendees target stipulated under Martyn's Law. The Pump House Monument is currently valued at £651,908. This value has not been checked for many years and should be revalued as it is generally felt that this figure is too high. The RFO has sought the authority to go ahead and get the buildings revalued and obtain costs for having the listed buildings revalued. This has been approved by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council and the Town Clerk.

Corn Exchange Events – Ticket sales are going well for upcoming events in the Corn Exchange and Town Hall, with regular talks and acts booked in for the next few months. To see what is happening, please visit: <https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk/corn-exchange/events> and please bear in mind that images are to follow so it is just a list with some links at present! External bookings are going well, which you can see on the webpage – and this excludes regular hirers – but we are receiving some complaints from potential hirers who are struggling to fix a date.

153. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE (Cont.)

Town Clerk – Handover dates have been arranged on Fridays from 13th March 2026 between the outgoing and incoming clerks. Linda Scott-Giles will finish on 30th April 2026 and Claire Commons will start on 1st May 2026. This is in good timing with the end of the Mayoral year and the Statutory Annual Meeting of the Town Council will be Claire's first meeting on 5th May 2026.

Incident Report by the Operations Manager – The Operations Manager explained that an incident occurred regarding a member of the public trying to access the Mayor's Charity event on Saturday 14th February. A member of staff was verbally abused and the need for security at future events will need to be considered.

Thank you from the Committee Clerk – The Committee Clerk thanked the Council for their support during her time studying for CiLCA which she passed on 9th February. She also thanked her colleagues for their understanding and co-operation and would like to thank especially to the Town Clerk for her unwavering support throughout the past year of studying.

154. CIVIC REPORT

To be sent to Councillors following on from the meeting.

155. TO CONSIDER AN APPLICATION FROM IN JOLLY GOOD COMPANY

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke , SECONDED by Cllr Y Miéville and AGREED (9 in favour, 4 against) that:

The Town Council very much values what they do and would like to support them, if all dates proposed are booked then the council would offer a 50% discount on venue hire for the forthcoming year.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr Quayle and Cllr Clarkson left the meeting at 7:33pm

156. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM THE BLANDFORD BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION REGARDING THE PROPOSED FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lacey-Clarke, SECONDED by Cllr S Hitchings and AGREED (11 in favour, 2 non-votes) that:

The Town Council supports the request for free venue hire.

The Town Council supports the Grant request but would deduct the cost of the venue hire and the cost of the Stour Valley band (the council will give them one free use of their 10 allocated uses) and agrees to underwrite the rest of the costs requested with the expectation that they also seek other exterior funding.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Cllr Quayle and Cllr Clarkson returned to the meeting at 7:42pm.

157. TO APPROVE THE UPDATED SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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

The Town Council approves the policy.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

158. TO CONSIDER OPTIONS AND EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY FOR A REPLACEMENT PHOTOCOPIER

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

The Town Council agreed to the lease agreement, which includes an upgraded version of the current machine that will be leased at a cost of £238 + VAT a quarter for a period of 5 years, and will have a 5-year warranty on it (Expenditure Authority: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, S1-8).

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

159. TO CONSIDER SETTING UP A WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW THE FREEMAN SECTION OF THE STANDING ORDERS (CHAIRMAN'S REQUEST)

The item was not supported.

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

160.1 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group – Blandford +

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 23rd March 2026.

160.2 BFTC Commemoration Group

A meeting is scheduled and they are considering being renamed The Commemoration Group.

160.3 Climate Change and Biodiversity

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 4th March 2026. Litter pick dates have been sent out.

160.4 Dorset Council Grant to support the Market Area Enhancement Project

There is a working group meeting scheduled for Thursday 19th March 2026. A meeting with Chris Peck from Dorset Council has been arranged on 7th April 2026.

161. REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

None

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

SIGNED

DATED