



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

To Finance & Staffing Cllrs; S Hitchings (Chair), H Miéville (Vice Chair), C Stevens, Y Miéville, T Clarkson, M Putt, G Del-Pinto, L Hitchings:
All other recipients for information only.

Tuesday, 15 September 2026

Dear Member

Summons

You are summoned to a meeting of the **Finance & Staffing Committee** of Blandford Forum for the transaction of the business shown on the agenda below. To be held at 7 pm on **Monday, 21 September 2026** in the Council Chamber, Corn Exchange. The quorum for the Finance & Staffing Committee is 5.

Public Participation and Democratic Quarter Hour

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 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 invite members of the public to comment on specific issues where their particular knowledge on a subject might prove of benefit to the Committee.

Join: [Teams Link](#)

General Duties of the Council

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.

Recording of Meetings

All attendees should be aware that filming, recording, photography or similar activity may take place during the meeting.

Date of next Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting: Monday, 14th December 2026

Yours sincerely

Claire Commons BA (Hons), Town Clerk

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



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



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Agenda

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Anticipated meeting end time 8:15pm

FS2.1 Public Participation

(7:00 pm) To allow the public to make representations to the Council.

(up to 15 mins)

Receive and note

Report Author:

Background

The Standing Orders of the Council (specifically Standing Order 3) provide for a designated Public Participation session at each meeting of the Council and its Committees.

During Public Participation, members of the public are invited to address the meeting regarding matters on the published agenda or within the Council's powers.

Public Participation is distinct from the formal business of the meeting. Once the session concludes, the public are observers only and must not participate further unless invited by a resolution of the Council.

The Council's commitment to openness, transparency, and community engagement supports the inclusion of Public Participation within the formal structure of the meeting.

At the Annual Meeting of the Council, Public Participation shall only commence after the election of the Chair, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Orders.

Members of the public registered to speak

None registered at the point of issuing papers.

Conduct of Public Participation

Public Participation will occur at the start of the meeting.

Each speaker may address the meeting for a maximum of three minutes, subject to the Chair's discretion to extend or reduce this time if necessary.

The maximum total duration for Public Participation shall normally be 20 minutes unless the Council resolves otherwise.

Speakers are asked to address the meeting courteously, and must not make offensive, defamatory, or irrelevant comments. Speakers do not have a right to expect debate or immediate responses.

Recording of Public Participation

The minutes of the meeting shall record that Public Participation took place and will summarise the general topics raised, but shall not record the names of individual speakers.

Recommendation

That the public comments are received, and any points of note are identified for consideration at future meetings of the Council or its committees or for action by officers of the Council

Reason for Recommendation

To acknowledge public engagement in accordance with Standing Orders and ensure that matters raised are appropriately considered without committing the Council to immediate decisions.

FS2.2 **Apologies**

(7:15 pm) To receive and consider for acceptance, apologies for absence from Councillors summoned to attend (1 min)

Decision Item

Report Author: Town Clerk

Background

Councillors are holders of public office and are summoned to attend meetings of the Council and its committees.

In accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council must consider and decide whether to accept the reason for absence provided by any Councillor who is unable to attend a meeting.

If a councillor fails to attend any meeting of the Council (or its committees) for a period of six consecutive months, without having obtained formal acceptance of their apologies by the Council (or the relevant committee), they are automatically disqualified from office.

Apologies received and reason

None received at the time of issuing papers

Recommendation

That the Council considers and either accepts or rejects each apology for absence received.

Reason for Recommendation

Accepting apologies resets the six-month period for continuous attendance, ensuring compliance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

(End)

FS2.3 **Declarations of Interest**

(7:17 pm) To declare interests relating to the business of the meeting.

(2 min)

Receive and note

Report Author: Town Clerk

Background

All Councillors and Officers are reminded of their obligations under the Blandford Forum Town Council Code of Conduct to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests, or Non-Registerable Interests relating to matters on the agenda.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest, it is the individual Councillor's responsibility to declare that interest at the earliest opportunity in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

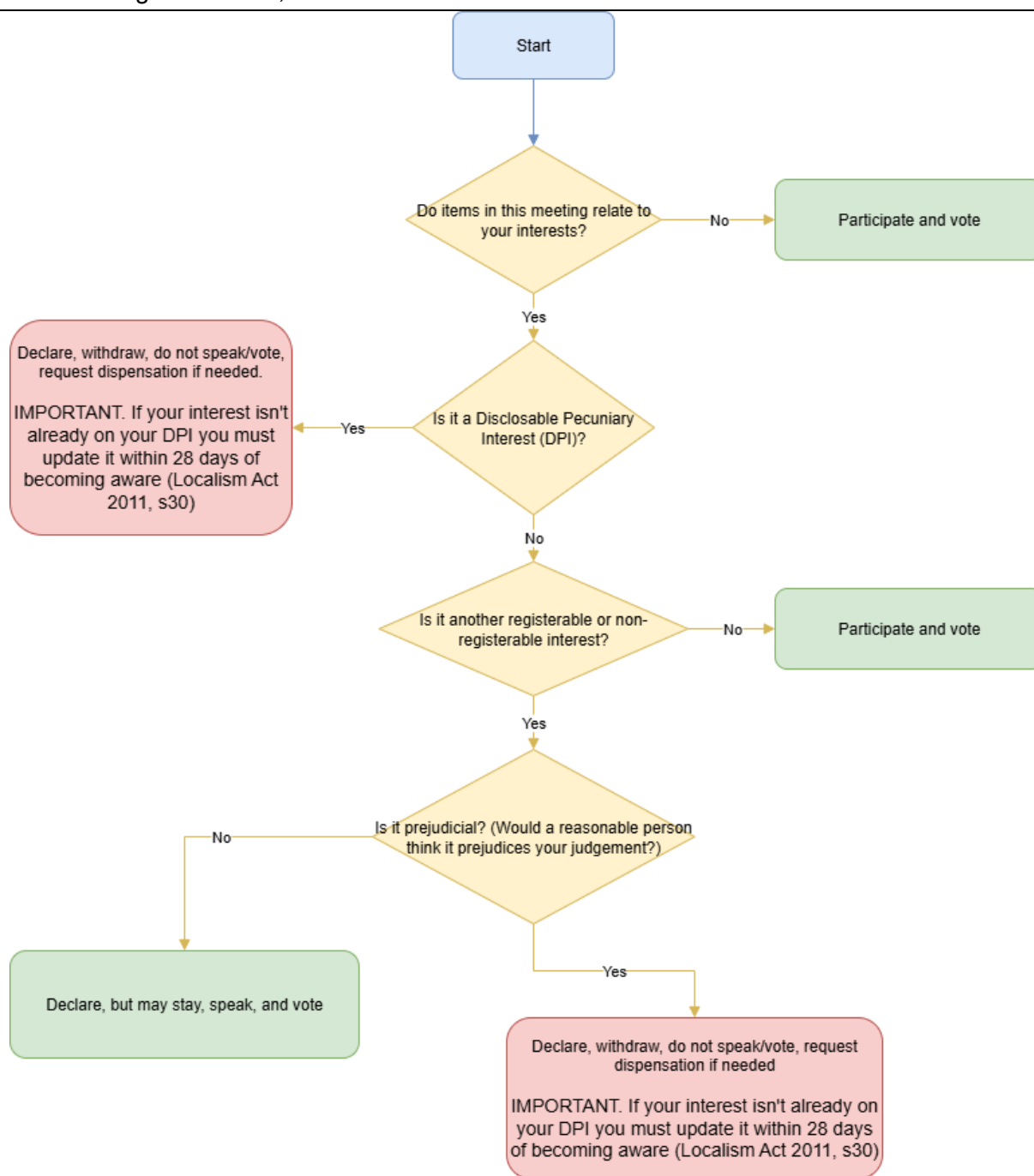
The Clerk will report any dispensations granted prior to the meeting.

Refer to Tables 1 and 2 in the [Code of Conduct](#) for further details about the types of interests which may apply.

If you think you need to request a dispensation, the process is included within the [Dispensation Request Form.docx](#).

The table below provides a summary of what your responsibilities are depending on the type of interest declared.

Type of Interest	Declare at Meeting?	Stay for Debate?	Vote?	Withdraw?	Notes
DPI (registered or not)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Must declare and withdraw, unless dispensation granted
Other/Non-Registerable (not prejudicial)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Declare, but may participate fully
Other/Non-Registerable (prejudicial)	Yes	No (except to speak if public can)	No	Yes	Declare, may speak if public can, then withdraw
With Dispensation	Yes	As specified	As specified	As specified	Dispensation may allow limited participation



Recommendation

That the Council notes the declarations made in relation to the business of the meeting.

Reason for Recommendation

Recording declarations at the meeting ensures transparency, compliance with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct, and adherence to statutory obligations.

(End)

FS2.4 Minutes

(7:18 pm) To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee.(2 min)

(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)

Decision Item

Report Author:

Background

In approving draft minutes, the Council is concerned solely with whether the minutes accurately record the proceedings and resolutions of the relevant meeting.

It is immaterial whether individual Councillors were present at the meeting to which the minutes relate.

If any corrections are necessary due to inaccuracies, amendments must be approved by formal resolution before the minutes are signed.

Recommendation

That the minutes of Finance and Staffing Meeting on 8th June 2026 be approved for signing as a true record of the decisions taken.

(End)

FS2.5 **Officer Report to the Committee**

(7:20 pm) To receive reports pertaining to the Finance & Staffing Committee.

(5 min)

(Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12)

Receive and Note

Report Author:

Summary

- a Reports provided within this item are to be received, they provide updates on decisions already taken by the Committee and actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation (where not previously reported).

Updates and Actions from Monday, 08 June 2026

Minute Ref	Decision	Status	Update
	(copied from the minutes)	 Complete	Brief update
		 In Progress	Brief update to show current status and next step(s)
		 Not Started	Brief update to explain why it hasn't started and if appropriate, what will get it moving.

Updates and Actions from previous meetings

Minute	Decision	Status	Update
72	Internal Auditor continued appointment	 Complete	This was resolved at Full Council on 22 June 2026
83.2	Change in responsibilities/hours	 In Progress	To be reviewed at F&S in September (1 month short of required timeline) or December (2 months over required timeline)

Recommendation

- b That the reports are received and noted and any actions arising identified for future meetings of the Council or its Committees

Reason for Recommendation

- c To keep members updated on committee actions and information.

(End)

FS2.6 Review of Financial Documentation

(7:30pm) To receive and retrospectively approve financial transactions and controls, and to review expenditure against budget and related financial records to 31 August 2026. (10 mins)

Decision Item

Report Author: Town Clerk

Summary and Background information

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations (sections 5 & 6), members are required to receive and retrospectively approve schedules of payments and financial transactions made under delegated authority.

The Committee has been provided with the following:

- [Faster Payments](#) – 28th May to 10 September
- [Direct Debits](#) – May to August 2026
- [Petty Cash claims](#) – 30 June (claim 2), 18 August (claim 3)

These records are presented to enable the Committee to exercise oversight of payments already made and to confirm that the transactions are properly received and approved in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

Analytical Review of Expenditure against Budget

Members are also asked to consider the analytical review of expenditure against budget and the associated financial controls and balances disclosed in the following documents:

- Administration Budget for the year to 31 August 2026
- Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 31 August 2026
- Reserves Accounts as at 31 August 2026
- Investment Account for the period to 31 August 2026
- Bank Reconciliation to 31 August 2026

The review enables members to consider actual income and expenditure against the approved budget, identify material variances or emerging pressures, confirm the position of earmarked and general reserves, review investment balances and activity, and obtain assurance that the bank reconciliation agrees the accounting records to the bank position at the reporting date.

Recommendation

That the Committee retrospectively approves Faster Payments of £183,916.61, Direct Debits of £145,213.85 and Petty Cash Claims 2 and 3 of £266.23, and receives and notes the budget, reserves, investment and bank reconciliation reports to 31 August 2026.

Reason for Recommendation

To ensure compliance with Financial Regulations, maintain appropriate member oversight of financial transactions made under delegated authority, and provide assurance over budget performance, reserves, investments and the reconciliation of the Council's accounting and bank records.

(End)

FS2.7 BARNES

(7:40pm) To consider separation of BARNES financial activity from the Town Council's accounts including grant funding arrangements. (15 mins)

Decision Item

Report Author: Town Clerk

Summary and Background information

BARNES is a charity with its own legal identify and governance responsibilities. Although separate bank accounts are already in place, currently the charity's income and expenditure is accounted for through Blandford Forum Town Council, which adds a layer of complexity and blurs the lines between the Council and the Chairty (for which the Council is sole trustee).

It is proposed that all income due to BARNES is received directly into its bank account and that all expenditure properly attributable to the charity is authorised, paid and recorded through BARNES. Blandford Forum Town Council would separately consider an annual grant to BARNES to meet the charity's approved net funding requirement.

This arrangement would provide a clear audit trail, improve transparency over the charity's income, expenditure, assets, liabilities, reserves and cash position, and make the respective accounts easier to administer and reconcile.

Demonstrating regular financial activity through the charity's own accounts would also provide a clearer evidence base for future grant applications and may improve funders' confidence that BARNES has the governance and financial capacity to receive and manage external funding.

Recommendation

To recommend to BARNES that all BARNES income and expenditure is accounted for directly through the charity from the beginning of the next Financial Year. That the Town Council provides an annual grant in support of the charity and that officers continue to administer the finances of the BARNES charity.

Reason for Recommendation

To improve financial clarity, accountability and administrative efficiency, while demonstrating BARNES' independent financial activity and strengthening its evidence base for future funding applications.

(End)

FS2.8 Mayor's Charity Account

(7:55pm) To consider bringing the administration of the Mayor's Charity Account in house and applying appropriate financial controls. (10 mins)

Decision Item

Report Author: Town Clerk

Summary and Background information

The Mayor's Charity Account is currently administered by the serving Mayor. This requires the bank mandate and account access arrangements to be changed each municipal year when a new Mayor takes office. Experience has shown that this process can be lengthy and can delay the transfer of responsibility between Mayors.

The present arrangement creates a period during the annual handover when the outgoing Mayor may retain financial control over an account intended for the incoming Mayor's charitable activities. It also concentrates responsibility for cash collection, recording and banking with one office-holder, providing less transparency and separation of duties than would normally be expected for funds associated with the Council.

There is also a business-continuity risk. If the serving Mayor were unexpectedly unable to act, the Council could have difficulty obtaining timely access to the account, confirming its position and safeguarding charitable funds.

It is therefore proposed that administration is brought in house. Day-to-day processing could be undertaken by the Mayor's Secretary, with financial oversight and accountability resting with the Responsible Financial Officer/Town Clerk, and with the account operated under controls equivalent to those applied to the Council's main bank account. These should include named officer access, appropriate dual authorisation, prompt recording and banking of income, regular reconciliation, retention of supporting records, and periodic reporting to members. The Mayor would continue to select and champion the supported charity or charities and lead fundraising activity, but would not hold sole financial control.

Proposed Operating Arrangements

- The account remains dedicated to the Mayor's charitable fundraising and distributions.
- Account administration is assigned to designated officers, with responsibilities documented and appropriate cover arrangements maintained.
- Receipts, including cash, are counted, recorded and banked promptly, with an independent check wherever practicable.
- Payments and transfers are to be supported by appropriate records and authorised by councillors in the same way as expenditure from the Town Council's bank accounts. In addition, the relevant Mayor must confirm the amount to be paid to each respective charity. Where the Mayor is a bank signatory, they should act as the first authoriser; where the Mayor is not a bank signatory, their confirmation must be provided by email before the bank transaction is initiated.
- The account is reconciled regularly and a summary of income, expenditure and balance is reported to the Finance and Staffing Committee.
- The bank mandate is revised in line with the Town Council banking arrangements to establish a stable officer-led arrangement, avoiding annual changes unless signatories or banking requirements change.

Governance and Financial Probity

Bringing the account within the Council office would improve separation of duties, resilience, auditability and member oversight. It would also provide a clearer record of funds raised, banked and distributed,

while reducing reliance on any one individual. Before implementation, officers should confirm with the bank the mandate and account-title requirements and ensure that the arrangements remain appropriate to the legal status and purpose of the charitable funds.

Financial Implications

There are no significant direct financial implications arising from this proposal. The changes relate to the administration and control of existing charitable funds and may reduce officer and banking administration associated with annual mandate changes.

Risk Assessment

The proposal reduces risks associated with business continuity, access to funds, separation of duties and financial oversight. Failure to implement the proposal would leave existing risks associated with annual changes to account control and reliance on a single office-holder.

Recommendation

That the Mayor's Charity Account be administered by Blandford Forum Town Council under officer management and oversight by the Responsible Financial Officer, with payments authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and the serving Mayor confirming distributions to charities. The Responsible Financial Officer is authorised to implement the necessary banking and administrative arrangements.

Reason for Recommendation

To provide stronger financial control, transparency and continuity; align expenditure authorisation with the Council's established banking controls; retain the relevant Mayor's confirmation over distributions to their chosen charities; and provide a clear audit trail whether or not the Mayor is a bank signatory.

(End)

FS2.9 Civic Insignia

(8:05 pm) To consider and approve a protocol for the secure storage, collection and return of the Council's civic chains, insignia and robes (10 mins)

Decision Item

Report Author: Town Clerk

Summary and Background information

The Council's civic chains and insignia are high-value historic assets with a combined stated value of £41,342:

The Mayoress Consort Chain is undergoing a £450 repair. The jeweller reports that much of the repairs which have been made over time have been due to damage arising because its insignia is not kept in their bespoke box, with fine feathering and enamel at risk. All items must therefore remain in their boxes whenever not worn. The Town Clerk will separately investigate whether replacement boxes are needed.

Chains and insignia must remain boxed in the office safe except for authorised civic use, with collection shortly beforehand and prompt return. If the office is closed, they must be kept boxed in the Mayor's personal safe and returned at the earliest opportunity. Robes remain on the Corn Exchange mezzanine when not in use. Officers will record collections and returns.

Financial Implications

Immediate costs are £450 for the consort-chain repair and an estimated £50–£100 for a Mayor's safe. Any replacement-box costs will be reported separately.

Given the £41,342 combined value, stronger security, boxed storage and documented custody may support the Council's insurance position. Insured values and insurer requirements should be reviewed.

Risk Assessment

The protocol protects both security and historic condition. Secure boxed storage, authorised use, prompt return and a custody record reduce theft, loss and avoidable damage. Concerns must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk.

Recommendation

That the Council adopts the protocol for the safekeeping, collection and return of civic chains, insignia and robes as set out in this report, and authorises the Town Clerk to implement and administer it.

Reason for Recommendation

To safeguard the security, condition and historic significance of the Council's high-value civic assets through secure, boxed and auditable custody arrangements.

(End)