

Minutes of the VIRTUAL meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 351-086-565) of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Monday 21 September 2020 at 5.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman (from 5.35pm, minute 21)
Karen Hunt Martin Ray
Julian Jones Anne Rickard
Gill Massey Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr Dave Rickard, Will Austin (Town Clerk), Paul Fuszard (Finance and Office Manager) and Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor).

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

17. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllr Rose Allwork and, for lateness, Cllrs Geoff Ackerman and Dave Rickard.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19. MINUTES

The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, and that the Chairman should sign the minutes at the earliest available opportunity.

20. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

Cllr Ackerman joined the meeting at this point (5.35pm)

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 8 September 2020 be received and the following recommendations be approved.

(Min. 16) Town Council Grants to Smaller Bodies 2020/21

(a) that the following grants be approved under the General Power of Competence:

	£
Melplash Agricultural Society – Discover Farming Project	500
Stepping Out Cancer Rehabilitation Community Group – Provision of group exercise and wellbeing scheme	500
Bridport Young Performers (BYP) – Rehearsal costs	500
Home Start West Dorset – Running costs	500
Skills Training Bridport – Running costs	500

ASD and Social Anxiety Group – Teaching costs, materials, PPE, insurance – subject to viability of outdoor activities this year, and obtaining required funding for the proposed activities.	500
Home in Bridport – Running costs – subject to viability and relevant permissions.	500
Transition Town Bridport – Edible Garden project	500
Axe Valley & West Dorset Ring and Ride – Running costs	500
Bridport Refugee Support Campaign – Help resettle a refugee family in Bridport – subject to opening of a bank account and constituted status.	500
Bridport & District CAB – IT equipment	500
Bridport Young Person’s Action Trust – Memorial	300
Small Things – Creative Arts Workshops	500
Bridport Boys Dance – Two day dance workshop	400
Bridport Youth Dance – Programme of after school dance classes	500
Fingerprint Dance CIC – Performing arts project	500
Total Small Grants	£7,700

(Min. 17) Town Council grants to larger bodies 2019/20

RESOLVED: that the grants under a one-year Service Level Agreement be awarded for 2020/21 as follows:

Arts Centre	Leisure Centre	CAB	Museum	Youth Centre	WBDC	Total
£6,000	£4,000	£5,000	£4,500	£10,000	£3,000	£32,500

(Min 18) Community and Car Boot Grants Schemes

A recommendation from the sub committee was amended and resolved as follows:

RESOLVED:

- (i) that £491 be awarded to the Lower Walditch Play Area and Community Orchard Group.
- (ii) that given the current situation, the awarding of car boot fund grants be deferred for one year, with the exception of any urgent requests. This decision is to be subject to a review by the sub committee.

21. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2020/21 – 1ST REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3534.

Members thanked the Finance and Office Manager for his work in the effective management of the Council’s accounts.

RECOMMEND: that the 1st revision of the estimates for the year 2020/21 be approved.

22. BUDGET PLANNING 2021/22

Cllr Dave Rickard joined the meeting at this point (5.41pm)

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL 3535.

The Town Clerk reported on the proposed process and timetable for setting the Council's budget for 2021/22. He further advised that membership of the Budget Working Group would need to be reviewed. Although a specific membership was required, all councillors would be invited to attend. Cllr Sarah Williams confirmed she would attend as an observer.

RESOLVED: that

- (i) the membership of the Budget Working Group includes Cllrs Sarah Carney, Julian Jones, Gill Massey, Maggie Ray, Martin Ray, Anne Rickard and Dave Rickard.
- (ii) further nominations be invited from town councillors via the Members' Bulletin, and that the matter be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

23. EXTERNAL AUDIT 2019/20

The Town Clerk reported that the external auditor had examined the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2019/2020 and had offered a clean bill of health, for the 24th consecutive year. He said that this success was thanks to the work and diligence of the Finance and Office Manager, and the support of the internal auditor. Despite the absence of comment, the report of the auditor would need to be accepted by the Council.

- (i) RECOMMEND: that the report and finding of the external auditor in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020 be approved.
- (ii) RESOLVED: that Bridport Town Council thanks and congratulates the Finance and Office Manager for this achievement.

24. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 3537.

The Town Surveyor summarised the report which updated members on:

- Tree house at St Mary's Primary School
- St Mary's Play Area
- Market Yearbook
- Sitting Out Licences
- Remembrance
- Bridport Market
- Bucky Doo Square

The Town Surveyor also reported verbally on a proposed extension to the market on 12 December 2020 that would be Christmas themed.

The report included two recommendations, and following discussion it was: -

RESOLVED: that

- (i) Funding for replacement equipment at St Mary's Play Area and the play area improvement programme be released;
- (ii) £2,000 be allocated for the production of a Market Yearbook; and
- (iii) The report of the Town Surveyor be noted.

25. TOWN COUNCIL INVESTMENT WITH CCLA

The Town Clerk reported that the suspension in trading in the fund had been lifted, but that a 90 day notice period would apply to withdrawals. The Finance and Office Manager advised that the investment position would be further reviewed at the end of October and would be considered by the committee and the Budget Working Group.

Members discussed the need for this investment to be treated as long-term, particularly in light of the impact of COVID-19.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Town Clerk be noted.

26. COVID-19 IMPACT

The Town Clerk reported the estimated net current deficit after five months of the financial year was £38,000, resulting from lost income and additional COVID-19-specific expenditure. Further costs estimated at £8,000 to £9,000 had not been included in this figure as they may be covered from external support. Recent weeks had seen some improvement in the income position but this continued to be below budget and could be affected further by a second lockdown or other restrictions. The current estimated deficit for the year was of the order of £100,000 but the situation continued to be changeable. This was considered manageable but would set challenges for the 2020/21 budget setting process and use of reserves.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

27. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Gill Massey reported on the recent socially distanced juicing sessions of the Bridport Community Orchard Group. It was hoped that the group would hold market stalls as a means of selling the juice for fundraising.

Cllr Massey further reported that Bridport Millennium Green Trust had been working to remove tired shrubs and plant new. There had been positive feedback from the public.

28. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that

- (i) the Service 7 bus on target to recommence on 7 October 2020 under a new operator, Dorset Community Transport, and that
- (ii) the Bridport Gateway development was likely to see significant further delays before a planning application was submitted.

The Town Surveyor had received a request that the Council might consider a Service Level Agreement grant for the recently opened new indoor skate park. Members discussed the provision of a report to the next meeting of this committee and suggested that members of the skate park organising committee be invited to speak at the Full Council meeting in November.

Cllr Dave Rickard asked which of the Council's committees would be the appropriate forum for consideration of the proposed use of Boldwood House for homeless

provision. The Town Clerk advised that this would come under the remit of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee. He advised he would seek further information from Dorset Council and would raise it at the next meeting with Dorset Council ward members.

29. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 2 of the 2020/21 accounts, in the sum of £281,760.50, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: List Number 2 – 2020/2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman at the earliest available opportunity.

30. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED: that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

31. TOWN COUNCIL LEASES

The Town Clerk and Town Surveyor updated members on various matters relating to lease of Town Council premises.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

The meeting closed at **6:56pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 9 November 2020 at 5.30pm