

Minutes of the VIRTUAL Meeting (GoToMeeting ID: 230-499-925) of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Monday 15 March 2021 at 5.30pm.

PRESENT Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoff Ackerman Gill Massey
Rose Allwork Martin Ray
Karen Hunt Anne Rickard
Julian Jones Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Cllrs Dave Rickard (ex-officio) and Sarah Carney, Paul Fuszard (Finance and Office Manager), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

63. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

65. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 January 2021 be confirmed as a true and correct record and that the Chairman should sign the minutes at the earliest opportunity.

66. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 2 March 2021 be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(min. 35) Investments Review 2020/21 and Strategy 2021/22

RESOLVED : (1) that the investments made in 2020/21 be noted as in the report.
(2) that the Investments Strategy be considered under agenda item 11 [minute 73 below].

(min. 36) Asset Register

RESOLVED : that the Asset Register be approved and the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to make any final amendments, before it is signed by the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

(min. 37) Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

RESOLVED : (1) that the Council's Standing Orders be approved for use without amendment, pending a review taking account of updated model

Standing Orders.

- (2) that the Council's Financial Regulations be approved for use without amendment, pending a review taking account of updated model Financial Regulations.

(min. 38) Community Governance Review

- RECOMME (1) that a Working Group of members be established to consider the
NDE community governance review; and
D: (2) that the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Full
Council should consider the membership of the working group, and
that Cllrs Julian Jones, Maggie Ray, Martin Ray, Anne Rickard and
Dave Rickard be agreed as members.

67. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 9 February 2021 be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(min. 5) Market Issues

- RESOLVE that market fees be delegated to the Town Surveyor and Market
D: Superintendent.

(min. 6) Market Terms & Conditions/Markets Policy

- RESOLVE that the draft Market Terms and Conditions and Markets Policy be
D: delegated to the Town Surveyor, for consideration by Finance and
General Purposes Committee.

68. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Members considered two recommendations agreed at the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 10 March 2021 relating to ethical decision-making (minute 57), for onward recommendation to Full Council. The first was an overarching ethical decisions policy, which would apply to all decisions. The second was a decision matrix, the mechanism by which decisions would be measured against the policy. Following discussion of drafts tabled, it was:

RECOMMENDED: (1) that the following be adopted as the Council's Ethical Decisions Policy:

In the context of Bridport Town Council, ethical decisions and behaviour are those which, when undertaken by either council employees or elected councillors, avoids harm and enhances the wellbeing of Bridport residents in their role as global citizens.

This wellbeing has many dimensions, including, but not limited to:

- Economic wellbeing
- Social wellbeing
- Physical and mental health
- Legal & regulatory obligations
- Climatic and environmental consequences
- Human Rights enhancement
- The wellbeing of other global citizens and future generations

There will be occasions when two or more of these dimensions appear to be in conflict. On such occasions, the person acting will need to make a balanced judgement as to the greater good.

The Council's ethical decision matrix highlights the most obvious considerations when considering decisions.

and

(2) that the Ethical Decision Matrix be adopted for use, as shown at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

69. SERVICES ADMINISTED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 3603.

Outdoor Skate Park

A scheme was in development to provide a new outdoor skate park, play area and other improvements, alongside the installation of car ports at Plottingham. Partners included Maverick, a skate park provider, Crowdfunder and Crystal Johnson, who would be engaged to oversee fundraising and community engagement. An outline estimate of the total cost was £400,000, and the Council would contribute match funding from funds already set aside for skate park improvements. Delegated authority was sought for the Town Surveyor to agree a contract and fee with Crystal Johnson.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted and that the Town Surveyor be given delegated authority to agree a contract and fee.

Town Hall and TIC redecoration

Quotes were being obtained for redecoration, to be carried out at the earliest opportunity during a quiet period for the building. Works would be funded from existing budgets.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

Bothenhampton Nature Reserve and Jellyfields

The transfer of land from Dorset Council was proceeding, along with an ongoing funding commitment from Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council and a contribution from Dorset Council. Dorset Council officers were assessing the impact of Ash Dieback against a draft policy and would advise on the outcome, before finalising the transfer. The disease was in a fairly confined area.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

Playing Fields

The possibility of a perimeter barrier around two sports pitches at St Mary's was being considered, to protect those using the pitches from dog fouling, which was a significant and worsening issue.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

70. BUDGET 2020/21 – EARMARKING

The Finance and Office Manager reported that, in line with previous years, budget headings underspent may be reserved, to help finalise the budget outturn for the current financial year budget and to give flexibility for spending, outside of the formal annual accounts cycle.

RESOLVED: that the earmarking be carried out under delegation, in line with the approach set out by the Finance and Office Manager.

71. BRIDPORT COMMUNITY CHARITY

The Town Clerk reminded members that the Council was seeking to create a charity to manage buildings at risk; the charitable status being to ensure that other charities could transfer ownership. Support had been offered by Dorset Community Action to create the charity, with costs of specialist advice estimated at £1,000. Delegated authority was sought to proceed, subject to that upper limit. Any decisions of significance, such as the governance structure, would be referred to members for approval.

RECOMMENDED: that delegated authority be granted to the Town Clerk to proceed with the creation of a charity, subject to an upper limit on costs of £1,000 and any decisions of significance, such as the governance structure, being referred to members for approval.

72. PENSIONS DISCRETIONS POLICY – REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3604.

RESOLVED: that the existing Pensions Discretions Policy be confirmed, with no changes.

73. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3605.

The Town Clerk reported that a draft strategy tabled with the agenda was the first practical implementation of a more ethical approach to decision-making, that had been discussed earlier in the meeting, applied specifically to the Council's Investment Strategy. The report asked members to include wording to strengthen the commitment to ethics, and a scoring matrix, and to recommend a final draft of the strategy to Full Council.

RECOMMENDED: that the Investment Strategy and scoring matrix be agreed as shown at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

74. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Massey reported that:

- Bridport Millennium Green Trust had carried out tree planting on Coneygar Hill, with trees provided by the Bridport Tree Group. Trust volunteers had also worked to clear the area around the Ice House, to assist with heritage investigations;
- Bridport Community Orchard Group had installed a new polytunnel; and
- Replanting was underway at the Borough Gardens.

75. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Surveyor reported that he was in discussion with an organisation proposing to stage a trail running event on 24 and 25 April 2021, including a request to hire the Salt House as the event HQ. They had been advised to consult with the Dorset Safety Advisory Group. The organisers had advised that they intended to proceed regardless and the date had caused some concern for officers, in light of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. Larger outdoor events would not be allowed before 17 May 2021.

Although no specific delegation was sought or required for the approach taken, members indicated their shared concern regarding the proposed event and their support for the Town Surveyor's actions.

76. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 5 of the 2020/21 accounts, in the sum of £170,727.82 which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting. This was tabled for members' information, and it was

RESOLVED: that List 5 of the 2020/21 accounts be approved for signature by the Chairman at the earliest available opportunity.

The meeting closed at **7.13pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 14 June 2021

Bridport Town Council Ethical Decision Matrix

If the decision is not likely to involve a transaction in excess of £5,000 or is a minor non-financial one, then the points below should be considered but the matrix need not be completed.

Scoring: highest scoring represents most negative ethical impact or lowest compliance with ethical policy.

Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Score the negative impact the decision could have on people, locally and/or globally.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative impact the decision could have on future generations – economically, socially or environmentally.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative environmental impact the decision could have in the short term.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative economic impact the decision could have on local people.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the contractor as a living wage employer. (1=living wage employer, 4=not)	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4
Score the decision against the human rights standards of the Bridport Citizens' Charter. (1=most compliant, 4=least compliant)	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score (lowest is most ethical option)					

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Strategy has been produced in accordance with Guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 15(1) (a) of the Local Government Act 2003.

2.0 Objectives

2.1 The general policy objective is that the Town Council will invest prudently, consistent with the proper levels of security and liquidity.

2.3 While adhering to the statutory requirements and policy objectives of security, liquidity and yield, a further policy objective is that in addition to directing investment decisions towards what is best for the financial position of the Council, prudence and due diligence checks will include social, ethical and environmental considerations (Appendix 1) in full recognition of the Council's corporate social responsibility, Rights Respecting and Climate Emergency policies.

3.0 Specified Investments (Short Term)

3.1 Specified investments are those offering high security and high liquidity. All such investments shall be in sterling and for no longer than one year.

3.2 For the prudent management of its treasury balances, maintaining sufficient levels of security and liquidity, funds which are surplus for up to three months can be invested with one or more of the UK major clearing banks and/or building societies or similar financial institutions with good credit ratings. If it is proposed to invest in institutions other than banks and building societies then this decision will be taken by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

3.3 The placement of funds in specified investments shall be delegated to the Responsible Financial Officer, who will determine the maximum period for which funds may be prudently invested subject to para. 3.1 and 3.2 above, so as not to compromise liquidity.

4.0 Non-Specified Investments

4.1 These have greater potential risk, such as investment in stocks and shares and the Town Council will not participate in such investments, which are considered not to offer the level of security and liquidity needed.

5.0 Long Term Investments

5.1 Long Term Investments are defined in the Guidance as greater than 36 months. Any decision on long term investments shall be agreed by the full Council on the recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

6.0 Ethical Considerations

6.1 The power to invest must be exercised for investment purposes in accordance with the provisions of this Strategy. Investment decisions must be directed towards what is best for the financial position of the Council. However, so long as that remains true, the precise choice of investment may be influenced by wider social, ethical or environmental considerations.

Appendix 1 – Investment Strategy Ethical Decision Matrix

If the decision is not likely to involve a transaction in excess of £5,000, then the points below should be considered but the matrix need not be completed.

Scoring: highest scoring represents most negative ethical impact or lowest compliance with ethical policy.

Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Score the negative impact the decision could have on people, locally and/or globally.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative impact the decision could have on future generations – economically, socially or environmentally.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative environmental impact the decision could have in the short term.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the negative economic impact the decision could have on local people.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score the contractor as a living wage employer. (1=living wage employer, 4=not)	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4
Score the decision against the human rights standards of the Bridport Citizens' Charter. (1=most compliant, 4=least compliant)	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanatory note					
Score (lowest is most ethical option)					