

Minutes of the VIRTUAL meeting (Zoom ID: 849 3067 6167) of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held on Monday 13 September 2021 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman Martin Ray
 Rose Allwork Anne Rickard
 Karen Hunt Sarah Williams
 Gill Massey

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

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

21. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllr Julian Jones.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, and that the Chairman should sign the minutes at the earliest available opportunity.

24. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 7 September 2021 be received and the following recommendations be approved.

(Min. 19) Town Council Grants to Smaller Bodies 2021/22

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

	£
The Bank of Dreams & Nightmares – Training costs	500
Melplash Agricultural Society – Discover Farming Project	500
Axe Valley & West Dorset Ring and Ride – Running costs	500
Bridport Heritage Forum – Queens Diamond Jubilee and creation of Town Centre 1921 census map	500
Bridport Musical Theatre Company – Storage	600
Bridport Literary Festival – Brid Lit Kids project	250
Bridport & District CAB – IT equipment	500
Transition Town Bridport – Edible Garden project	500

Stepping Out Cancer Rehabilitation Community Group – Group exercise and wellbeing scheme	500
Bridport Chamber Orchestra – Summer concert 2022	250
Bridport Youth Dance – Programme of after school dance classes	500
Bridport Boys Dance – Dance programme	400
Fingerprint Dance CIC – Radio show (pending further information – delegated to the Town Clerk)	500
Total Small Grants	£6,000

(Min. 20) Town Council grants to larger bodies 2021/22

RESOLVED: that, subject to the approval of the Council Leader following Service Level Agreement review meetings, the grants under a one-year Service Level Agreement be awarded for 2020/21 as follows:

Bridport Arts Centre	Bridport Leisure Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau	Bridport Museum	Bridport Youth & Community Centre	West Bay Discovery Centre (BADT)	2020 Skate & Ride	Literary & Scientific Institute (BADT)	Total
£6,000	£4,000	£5,000	£4,500	£10,000	£3,000	£5,000	£5,000	£42,500

25. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2021/22 – 1ST REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3652.

The Finance and Office Manager reported that both income and expenditure were 7% higher than at the same point in the previous year, but remained below their 2019-20 level. Market income appeared to be recovering well following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

Responding to questions, the Finance & Office Manager advised that Town Hall expenditure stood at 88% of budget due to interior decorative work being completed early in the financial year, and that income from the WI Hall was not reflected in these estimates as it had only recently reopened.

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 2021/22 be approved.

26. BUDGET PLANNING 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL 3653.

The Town Clerk reported on the proposed process and timetable for setting the Council's budget for 2022/23, and key issues for consideration. He further advised that membership of the Budget Working Group would need to be reviewed. Following discussion it was

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.

27. EXTERNAL AUDIT 2020/21

The Town Clerk reported that the external auditor had examined the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/2021 and had offered a clean bill of health, for the 25th 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 2020/2021 be approved.
- (ii) RESOLVED: that Bridport Town Council thanks and congratulates the Finance and Office Manager for this achievement.

Members gave a round of applause for the achievement of the Finance and Office Manager.

28. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 3655.

The Town Surveyor summarised the report, which updated members on:

- Old Dairy Site
- Solar Car Ports
- Asset Transfers
- Murals
- Branden's Trail
- MUGA
- East Street toilets
- New Zealand pond
- Mountfield windows
- Bus station
- Christmas Cheer
- Plottingham Fields regeneration project

The Town Surveyor also added further detail not included in the report, on the following:

- Murals. Outline design ideas were presented to members.
- Branden's Trail. The first phase of work was complete, including a raised flower bed and contemplation area, and further enhancements would follow.
- New Zealand pond. Environment Agency funding and design approval were in place, and delivery of the project was expected by Spring 2022.
- Mountfield windows. Prices were being sought for sealed units, and works would commence when these were received.

- Bus Station. Specialist planning consultants were assisting with feasibility work, to inform a planning application.
- Christmas Cheer. The Cheer Committee would be recommended not to proceed with the event in 2021, due to uncertainty regarding Covid-19 restrictions. Instead, the successful Christmas Market Days held in 2020 would be repeated.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Town Surveyor be noted, and the following funding allocations be approved and appropriate budgetary sources identified:

- (i) £10,000 for three-phase electrics as part of the solar car ports project;
- (ii) £3,500 as a contribution to a mural at Bridport FC;
- (iii) £1,130 for a lighting scheme for the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA); and
- (iv) £100,000 as match funding for external fundraising for the Plottingham Fields regeneration project.

At 8.33pm it was

RESOLVED: that the meeting be paused for a comfort break.

The meeting resumed at 8.42pm.

29. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Gill Massey reported on:

- The Bridport Charities Garden Party held in July, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Almshouse Association; and
- A decision by the Bridport Community Orchard Group not to proceed with Apple Day. In its place, the group would run market stalls in October and November.

RESOLVED: that the reports from outside bodies be noted.

30. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that the Full Council meeting on 21 September 2021 would focus on proposals for a submission to a review of community governance, and he asked members to encourage public attendance.

31. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 2 of the 2021/22 accounts, in the sum of £289,288.30, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that Payment List 2 of 2021/22 be approved and signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

32. 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.

33. STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk summarised a report circulated to members prior to the meeting, and displayed at the meeting. The report set out current staffing arrangements, changes

since 2019, and future challenges. He asked members for views on priorities for attention.

In discussion, members highlighted the following:

- Apprenticeships;
- Resilience;
- Project management;
- Community engagement, including use of contractors for specific initiatives;
- Progression opportunities for existing staff; and
- Capacity for external funding applications.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted and a further report be tabled for committee consideration.

34. PROPERTY MATTERS

The Town Surveyor reported on changes to tenancies and forthcoming lease renewals, and invited members' views.

Cllr Sarah Williams left the meeting at this point (9.31pm).

Members discussed the matter and considered that further time was needed for reflection. It was therefore

RESOLVED: that members consider the issues raised and give views to the Town Surveyor.

The meeting closed at **9.41pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 8 November 2021