

Minutes of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of
Bridport Town Council held on Monday 8 November 2021 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Maggie Ray (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman Martin Ray
Karen Hunt Anne Rickard
Julian Jones Dave Rickard
Gill Massey Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Will Austin (Town Clerk), Terri Foxwell (TIC Manager),
Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor),
and one representative of the press.

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

35. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rose Allwork.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Karen Hunt declared an interest in Minute 43 as Chairman of the Bridport
Museum Trust.

Cllr Sarah Williams declared an interest in Minute 43 as a trustee of the Bridport
Museum Trust.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September
2021 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the Working Group held on
19 October 2021 be received and noted.

Cllr Julian Jones noted the low attendance at the meeting. The Town Clerk advised
that attendance was unusually low and was usually higher.

Cllr Dave Rickard asked whether the Country Market would return to the WI Hall. The
Tourist Information Centre Manager advised that this was unlikely, but that most stall
holders were now accommodated in the street markets.

39. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2021/2022 – 2nd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3665, setting out the
income and expenditure for the financial year to date, up to October 2021.

The Town Clerk reported that a recovery in income the current financial year compared with the previous year meant that the Council was on course to achieve its budgeted outturn, but that members should note that (i) income budgets had been lowered for 2021/22 anticipating an ongoing impact from Covid, and (ii) the projected outturn included a contribution of £85,000 from reserves, which was not sustainable. The Finance & Office Manager reported that income was 2% down compared with the same period in 2019/20 and further recovery was needed.

Members discussed:

- A preference for future reporting to provide more detailed explanations of major variances; and
- Variances in income including rent, hire and market stall income;

RECOMMEND: that the 2nd revision of the estimates for the year 2021/2022 be approved and that future revisions include a report highlighting major differences.

40. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR

The Town Surveyor updating members on the following items:

- (i) Mural projects. A mural was in place on the end wall at Bridport Football Club, and a further mural on the 66-panel side wall was planned, with funding secured. National Highways had permitted a mural at the A35 underpass, and three further smaller murals were in place at West Bay Play Area and Branden's Trail. A visit to Retford had highlighted the possibility of murals celebrating local businesses.

Members discussed:

- Possible sponsorship for murals;
- A range of designers engaged; and
- Consideration of inclusion of themed and sponsored town maps.

- (ii) Plottingham Fields. The proposed scheme was as previously presented to members, but was under review to establish whether the approach should be strategic, or focus on individual aspects.

Members discussed the need to tie this project in with the Foundry Lea development, the Council's Access & Movement Study, and the redevelopment of St Michael's Estate.

- (iii) Bus Station. The Town Surveyor was working with Dorset Council to develop a joint approach, and match funding of £10,000 had been secured on top of the £10,000 allocated by the Town Council.

Members discussed:

- The engagement of an external consultant for feasibility and funding work;
- The challenge of a unified project for the Bus Station; and
- Progress with installation of solar car ports, which was proceeding and planning permission was awaited.

- (iv) Sunny Days Nursery. The Town Surveyor had met with Cllr Rose Allwork to develop the idea of a community hub. A robust business plan was needed from Cllr Allwork, and negotiations with the landlord would be challenging.

Members discussed potential commercial tenancy interest, and whether there was scope for a reduced rent for a community initiative.

- (v) Asker Meadows. The new electric buggy now had a trailer with a cage, to enable collection of waste from larger bins to be installed at the meadows. The Council had received considerable praise for the replacement of a broken gate with a kissing gate, and for the meadow path which had recently been re-laid.
- (vi) Court Orchard Play Area. A steering group was being formed to develop ideas for the play area, and a survey would follow.
- (vii) Christmas Cheer. The volunteer-run Cheer Committee had decided against proceeding with the full event in 2021, due to the Covid-19 risks at a large and crowded event with alcohol. Instead, there would be three festive markets, Santa's Grotto and other events, as set out in the poster previously circulated to members.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council supports the Christmas Cheer Committee's decision.

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

41. BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Town Clerk reported that a first meeting of the Working Group had taken place, with a reflection on 2020/21, the possible outturn for 2021/22 and the initial thoughts regarding the setting of the budget for 2022/23, given the continuing effects of COVID-19. A draft budget would now be updated, taking account of discussions at the meeting, for consideration at the second of what was likely to be three meetings in total. The next formal consideration would be at the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee on 7 December 2021.

Members considered:

- Aligning priorities with the Town Council's 5-Year Plan;
- How best to restore the reserves impacted by the pandemic;
- A need to review fees and charges to maximise income potential;
- The potential financial consequences of changes arising from a review of community governance;
- Possible delays in project delivery, arising from the financial challenges resulting from the pandemic; and
- The absence of government support to town and parish councils during the pandemic.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

42. REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Ackerman had stepped down as the Town Council's representative to the Bridport Museum Trust, the Bridport Twinning Association, Bridport Charities, and the Bridport & District Community Football Partnership. Members were asked to consider how to proceed in terms of replacement.

Members discussed:

- Whether two representatives were required for the Museum Trust, which was looking to reduce in size as part of a governance review;
- Whether the Football Partnership was still active;
- The role of councillor representatives in engaging and reporting back; and
- Whether the feedback requirements should be higher for organisations with Service Level Agreements.

RESOLVED: that

- (i) The Museum Trust reduces its appointments from two to one,
- (ii) A report be prepared for Full Council to consider:
 - appointment of representatives to the Bridport Twinning Association, Bridport Charities, and the Bridport & District Football Trust; and
 - The future role and requirements of councillor representatives.

43. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LARGER BODIES

Cllr Karen Hunt declared an interest in this item as Chairman of the Bridport Museum Trust. Cllr Sarah Williams declared an interest as a trustee of the Bridport Museum Trust.

The Town Clerk reported that he and the Leader had met with each of the SLA-supported bodies and agreed revisions to Service Level Agreements, taking out some of the now redundant references to the former West Dorset District Council, adding objectives from the Town Council plan, and specifically requesting support for the Rights Respecting Charter and Climate Emergency Strategy. All of the current funding contributions had been maintained at their previous levels, with the exception of Bridport Museum, whose funding would be increased by £1,500 to £6,000. These decisions had been delegated to the Leader at the previous meeting.

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

44. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Gill Massey reported that the Community Orchard Group had sold produce at the Farmers' Market and a stall was proposed for the Christmas Market. A legacy from Mrs Northover had enabled the group to purchase a new shed and trees.

Cllr Massey further reported that the Bridport Millennium Green Trust was carrying out new planting, with the help of the Town Council.

Cllr Sarah Williams reported that the Museum was carrying out a governance review that would conclude in early 2022. A management project was also ongoing. The Museum shop would be open for Christmas shopping. A talk about Agnes Suttill would take place on 24 November 2021.

Cllr Dave Rickard reported that Transition Town Bridport had been part of a countywide eco homes event.

RESOLVED: that the reports from outside bodies be noted.

45. COUNCIL MEETING PAPERS

The Town Clerk reported that after consulting with members, it was proposed that hard copies of meeting papers be provided only to those members not on email, or who specifically request copies. The agenda could be provided in Word format, so that it could be adapted for better on-screen viewing. It was further proposed that the use of coloured paper for committee papers be discontinued, except for yellow reports to indicate confidential items. These changes would not have major financial or environmental impacts, but there would be a modest benefit in terms of both, as well as a minor reduction in administrative overhead. The main reason for proposing the changes was that it sent the right message to the community about both the Council's environmental credentials and its commitment to keeping costs down.

RESOLVED: that the proposals for reduction in hard copy Council papers, and coloured paper, be approved as set out by the Town Clerk.

46. TOWN CRIER'S REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Crier, ENCL: 3667.

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

47. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Sarah Williams noted her deep frustration that this item should be titled 'Communications' as previously agreed. Announcements by the Mayor, Leader and Town Clerk were to be tabled for Full Council. The Town Clerk apologized and said he would address this.

The Town Clerk reported that:

- Remembrance Sunday parade would take place on 14 November. There would be some changes, with the church service being held outside after the Mayor's address, and no parade back up South Street after the service.
- Cllr Karen Hunt was giving a talk on Agnes Suttill at the WI Hall on 24 November at 2pm. Tickets were £3 from the TIC or website and councillor support would be appreciated.
- A plan to hold Full Council at the WI Hall on 16 November was not possible, due to a double-booking, so it will be at the Town Hall. A new camera and microphone system would be trialed if available in time for the meeting.
- Approximately 200 volunteers who supported vulnerable people during lockdowns and latterly helped to deliver the vaccination hub in Bridport were due to celebrate one year since the first vaccinations on 16 December 2020, and had asked for Town Council support.

48. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 3 of the 2021/22 accounts, in the sum of £206,759.48, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that accounts list number 3 for 2021/2022 be approved.

The meeting closed at **8.58pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 17 January 2022