

Minutes of a meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held at Bridport Town Hall on Tuesday 29 March 2022 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT Cllr Dave Rickard (in the Chair)

Cllr	Sandra Brown	Gill Massey
	Sarah Carney	Maggie Ray
	Kelvin Clayton	Martin Ray
	Julian Jones	Anne Rickard

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Ian Bark (Town Mayor, attending via Zoom), Paul and Lynne Hartmann (members of the public), Glenn Crawford (member of the public), Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager, via Zoom), and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

### **OPEN PUBLIC FORUM**

Paul Hartmann raised five questions regarding local community support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and the role of the Town Council in coordination of support for hosts and refugees.

Glenn Crawford mirrored the comments of Mr Hartmann and asked for clarity regarding processes.

Lynne Hartmann expressed concerns about the obstacles and delays presented by the visa system for Ukrainian refugees.

The Town Clerk responded on behalf of the Town Council, advising that he had engaged with Dorset Council regarding their statutory roles in checking accommodation, safeguarding, school admissions, and in allocating payments under the scheme. He had also engaged with Help & Kindness, an organisation contracted by Dorset Council to oversee community support across Dorset. He outlined the process as it had been explained to him, that Dorset Council would contact hosts when they received details from the Government.

Cllr Sarah Carney suggested contact with the Bridport Refugee Support Campaign for help in understanding the Government guidance, as the group had expertise from their involvement in a separate resettlement programme.

The Town Clerk undertook to carry out further investigation to establish how best the Town Council could support hosts and refugees.

Paul Hartmann also expressed concern at a lack of developer contact regarding the Foundry Lea development and specifically the concerns of Symondsburry Parish Council with regard to safe access across the A35 to the coast.

The Town Clerk advised that he had sought a meeting with the developers, whom he considered might have been too engaged in the development's Reserved Matters planning application to respond in a timely way. Cllr Dave Rickard highlighted funding issues that might affect the A35 crossing requirements. Paul

Hartmann considered that these should be covered by the Miles Cross junction works. The Town Clerk advised that he would further chase for a meeting.

**50. APOLOGIES**

The Town Mayor, Cllr Ian Bark, attended via Zoom; however, legal restrictions require councillors to be physically present at the meeting.

In the absence of the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor, it was

RESOLVED: that Cllr Dave Rickard chair the meeting.

Cllr Rickard assumed the chair.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs Geoff Ackerman, Rose Allwork, Ian Bark, Dave Bolwell, Karen Hunt, Barry Irvine, Ros Kayes, Sarah Williams and Steve Williams.

**51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest by councillors, and interests declared at committee meetings were noted in the minutes of those meetings.

**52. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record, and that the Town Mayor should sign the minutes.

**53. STANDING ORDER 14(b)**

There were no questions pursuant to Standing Order 14(b).

**54. COMMITTEES**

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 31 January 2022 were presented by Councillor Dave Rickard.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 31 January 2022 be received and adopted.

(b) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 21 March 2022 were presented by Councillor Dave Rickard.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 21 March 2022 be received and adopted.

(c) FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14 March 2022 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Maggie Ray.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14 March 2022 be received and adopted.

Members considered funding requirements for repairs to the tennis courts at Plottingham Fields, which had been referred to in the minutes.

(d) ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 9 March 2022 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Kelvin Clayton.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 9 March 2022 be received and adopted.

Members considered the request for improved access to the beach at West Bay for people with disabilities. The Town Clerk advised that he had contacted the Harbour Master to pursue the request.

**55. COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE**

The Town Clerk reported that the Government's role in the Homes for Ukraine scheme appeared to be confined to enabling potential hosts to register their interest, and in issuing visas to refugees. The latter was reported to be a cumbersome process subject to lengthy delays. The Clerk reiterated the statutory role of Dorset Council outlined in the Public Forum, and that of the organisation Help & Kindness. He advised that 'matching' of hosts to refugees had been said by the Government to be the responsibility of hosts, albeit that a number of charities, for example Reset, had established matching services.

Members considered:

- Slow progress with processing of visa applications, with 10% said to have been processed to date;
- A need to establish how many hosts in the Bridport area had registered, and how many refugees were expected; and
- A concern raised by Cllr Julian Jones, that Town Council engagement in community support would be at odds with other refugee schemes which it had not been involved in. Members discussed this aspect and highlighted the urgency of the situation.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED: that

- (a) the Town Clerk should attempt to establish the number of hosts and refugees in the Bridport area;
- (b) the delays in visa processing be highlighted via the constituency MP;
- (c) the Town Council should proceed to develop a role in coordinating community support in Bridport; and

(d) contact with parish councils on the issue should be established.

**56. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

The Town Clerk reminded members that there would be no Public Forum at the Annual Town Council meeting in May, and that topics were sought for the following meeting in June.

RESOLVED: that the next Public Open Forum subject be confirmed at a later date, and that public views be sought.

Members considered a possible focus on either refugees or bus transport.

**57. REPORTS BACK FROM OUTSIDE BODIES**

There were no reports.

**58. COMMUNICATIONS**

The following items were reported for information:

- (1) The Town Mayor reported his list of engagements, ENCL: 3707.
- (2) The Town Clerk reported that
  - (a) Updated Covid-19 guidance for councillors and staff had recently been issued, with a view to ensuring continuity of service.
  - (b) The Royal British Legion Hall in Victoria Grove was under threat and that prior to a public meeting to be held at the Hall on Saturday 2 April, he had instigated a process to register the property as a potential asset of community value.
  - (c) Mayor Making had been rearranged again and would now take place on Thursday 26 May 2022.

The meeting closed at **8.30pm**.

**The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 28 June 2022**

**The Annual Town Council Meeting (Mayor Making) was to have been held on 19 May 2022, but will now take place on 26 May 2022**