

Minutes of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of
Bridport Town Council held on Monday 14 November 2022 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Sarah Williams (Chairman)

Cllrs: Geoffrey Ackerman Maggie Ray
Rose Allwork Martin Ray
Karen Hunt Anne Rickard
Julian Jones Dave Rickard
Gill Massey

Also in attendance: Will Austin (Town Clerk) and Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager).

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no speakers in the public forum.

35. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Karen Hunt declared an interest as the chair of the Bridport Museum Trust and Cllr Sarah Williams declared an interest as a Trustee of Bridport Museum Trust.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 September 2022 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 18 October 2022 be received and the following recommendations approved:
(i) that the Town Council and Bridport Business Chamber should write jointly to Dorset Council regarding concerns over shopper's parking permits.
(ii) that a complaint slip be produced for customers to send to Dorset Council.

Members discussed the social exclusion arising from moves towards online services – parking and others – without face-to-face or paper alternatives. Members considered that this approach was driven by a desire for savings. It was

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk should include, in the previously agreed letter to Dorset Council, concern at the social exclusion created by the lack of face-to-face opportunities to access Dorset Council services, and that to pursue this approach for the purpose of savings is not acceptable.

39. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2022/2023 – 2nd REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3759, setting out the income and expenditure for the financial year to date, up to 31 October 2022.

The Finance and Office Manager provided some additional commentary to the figures beyond the notes provided, including the impact of increased spending on Council reserves. Following discussions, it was

RECOMMENDED: that the 2nd revision of the estimates for the year 2022/2023 be approved.

40. ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk gave a report on one recommendation arising from the meeting of 7 November 2022. This referred to a proposal from a local researcher, Dr Jocelyn Bailey, to develop a blueprint for a virtual college of sustainable technologies, and other skills/ training provision in Bridport, that drew on a priority in the draft Bridport Investment Plan and supported the green transition. The committee had recommended that a contribution of up to £2,000 be made in support of this work.

The Clerk noted current pressures on the Council's finances and that no budget had been earmarked for this proposal. Members considered the merits of the proposal, and the possible use of surplus funding held by the Town Council following the closure of the South West Dorset LETS.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted and that a maximum of £2,000 be awarded as match funding to a request for a project to develop a blueprint for a virtual college of sustainable technologies, and other skills/ training provision in Bridport, provided that full match funding is achieved, with the allocation of the costs to be determined under delegation to the Town Clerk and Finance & Office Manager.

41. PROJECT AND SERVICE UPDATES

The Town Clerk updated members on the following items:

- (i) Solar Car Ports – these were nearing completion, although there remained an issue sourcing the supply of a particular type of electricity meter required for this installation. This would not affect the £20,000 Low Carbon Dorset grant, which was expected to be received in full.
- (ii) Asset transfers – WI Hall and West Bay Discovery Centre – The WI Hall transfer document had been drafted and agreed by the Bridport WI Trust. A separate agreement was required for other aspects of the transfer, and this was being drafted by the Council's solicitor. The West Bay Discovery Centre transfer would follow a similar approach, and there remained some issues to resolve before proceeding.
- (iii) Christmas Cheer – the event would be returning to its normal format on 7 December 2022. The Clerk thanked the Christmas Cheer Committee for bringing back this much-loved event.
- (iv) Homes for Ukraine – Town Council support continued, including payments to freelance support workers with Russian/Ukrainian language skills.
- (v) Warm Hubs – minor costs had been committed so far in supporting people in fuel poverty, including hire fees for Warm Hub venues, and refreshment costs. It was hoped that a Dorset Council grant application would cover these costs in future.

(vi) Youth Festival – the Mayor was pursuing a focus on youth in what might be his final Mayoral term, including discussions around ‘fringe’ youth events that sit alongside some of the main town events. Further details would be reported when established.

Members discussed the pressures on Council finances arising from unanticipated but important support for Ukrainian guests and for those in fuel poverty, and

RESOLVED: that the constituency MP be asked to pursue funding to support Ukrainian guests in the Bridport area.

RESOLVED: that a plan be developed to establish a Town Council role, limited to facilitation of refugee support and Warm Hubs.

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

42. BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Chairman and Town Clerk reported that a first meeting of the Working Group had taken place, with a reflection on 2021/22, the possible outturn for 2022/23 and the initial thoughts regarding the setting of the budget for 2023/24. A draft budget would now be prepared, taking account of discussions, for consideration at the next Working Group meeting on 25 November 2022. The next formal consideration would be at the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee on 6 December 2022.

Members considered the challenges of maintaining appropriate levels of reserve funding, and the possibility of a contribution by the Tennis Club towards the remedial works carried out to stabilise the tennis courts.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

43. INTERNAL AUDIT

The Finance and Office Manager reported that the first visit for 2022/23 had taken place, covering April to September 2022, without any recommendations arising and following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the report of the internal auditor be noted and approved.

44. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LARGER BODIES

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. All of the current funding contributions had been maintained at their previous levels.

The report also referred to two requests for additional funding, firstly an uplift to the West Bay Discovery Centre grant, with an indication that this be from £3,000 per annum to £4,000 per annum, and secondly a contribution towards fundraising for repairs to the swimming pool at Bridport Leisure Centre. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the request for additional funding for West Bay Discovery Centre be deferred pending achievement of clarity over governance arrangements following the proposed transfer of the building to the Bridport Communities Trust.

RESOLVED: that Bridport Leisure Centre be invited to apply for funding from the West Bay Car Boot Sale grants fund, and that the Town Council should promote the fundraising campaign.

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

45. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Gill Massey reported that the Bridport Community Orchard Group would be selling its apple juice on the market on Saturday 10 December 2022 and that the wassailing event would take place in the orchard on Sunday 15 January 2023.

Cllr Karen Hunt reported that the vacated position of Museum Director had been replaced with a Museum Manager on a job share basis, the postholders being Sophie Bull and Helen Horler.

RESOLVED: that the reports from outside bodies be noted.

46. COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that:

- (i) The Remembrance Sunday parade and service had been a great success.
- (ii) He was due to meet with Bridport Business Chamber and Morrisons regarding fuel prices on 22 November 2022, and
- (iii) The Town Council was honoured to receive the best small market of the year award at the annual NABMA conference in Harrogate recently.

47. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 3 of the 2022/23 accounts, in the sum of £383,115.78, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that accounts list number 3 for 2022/2023 be approved.

The meeting closed at **8.28pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 16 January 2023