

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE
of Bridport Town Council held in Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 7 June 2023
at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Kelvin Clayton (Chairman from item 2)

Ian Bark	Anne Rickard
Karen Hunt	Dave Rickard
Ros Kayes	Steve Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Will Austin (Town Clerk), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), Terri Foxwell (Tourist Information Centre Manager), David Dixon (Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer), and 20 members of the public.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: that Cllr Kelvin Clayton be elected Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

Cllr Kelvin Clayton took the Chair.

PUBLIC FORUM

Louise Perkins addressed members, outlining issues that had affected trade in Barrack Street, including the impact of Covid-19 both during and after pandemic restrictions, and the removal of markets in the street. She considered that there was a need to open up the street to encourage shoppers.

Members discussed proposals included in the Bridport Access & Movement Study, the town centre health check and the reluctance of market traders to set up in Barrack Street. The Town Surveyor advised that he would welcome ideas for attracting traders.

Alison Little spoke on behalf of Bee Friendly Bridport, a group aiming to improve habitats for pollinators. The group wanted to apply for Bee Friendly status and had received a generally excellent community response. She asked that the Town Council give its support to collaboration on this initiative.

Lewis Black spoke about the issue of digital currency, highlighting his concern that the aim of global banking was to replace cash with a digital currency that would remove choice, privacy, and freedom.

Pat O'Neill also spoke about the need to retain cash as a payment option, as it was the only accessible medium. She expressed concern about the dangers of sole reliance on a digital currency and the internet and advised that many people in Bridport did not have a bank account and would be denied the right to buy as they pleased. She was also concerned about the impact on the market, car boot sale, the elderly, children receiving money from the tooth fairy, the disabled, the blind, and those with mental ill-health.

Roy Gregory spoke to emphasise the difference between the need to retain cash, which he supported, and suggestions that governments were set on replacing it with a digital currency, which he disputed. He referred to ministerial statements recorded in Hansard that confirmed this, and he expressed concern that non-existent fears were being raised by campaigners. He advised that he ran a local business and whilst he preferred card payment for accounting and staff safety reasons, he did not refuse cash.

Karin Schafer spoke on the subject of the proposed WHO Pandemic Preparedness Treaty. She advised that this would apply from May 2024 if the government did not opt out, and would grant huge powers to the WHO. She highlighted a video by Karol Sikora, and warned that democracy and sovereignty would be handed to the WHO, which she said was 75% funded by public corporations, including the Bill Gates Corporation.

Lynn Jones also spoke about the Pandemic Preparedness Treaty. She said there was a need, given NHS pressures, for us all to look after ourselves. She was part of the Bridport Health Alliance that advocated allopathic and holistic therapies and non-medical actions. She considered that people should be made responsible for their own health, rather than planning for a pandemic.

The Chair thanked members of the public for their addresses.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sarah Carney.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: that Cllr Dave Rickard be elected Vice Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 March 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. CLIMATE ACTION SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings of the Climate Action Sub Committee held on 30 March 2023 and 25 May 2023 be received and adopted.

7. BEE FRIENDLY TOWN STATUS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3814, setting out a proposal from Bee Friendly Bridport, that the town apply for Bee Friendly status, an award overseen by the Bee Friendly Trust. The report also incorporated feedback from another group opposing the proposal, in the main due to the incorporation of 'guerrilla planting' as one of the criteria, as this could lead to non-native species

being planted in inappropriate locations. Bee Friendly Bridport had advised that this criterion need not be met. The report highlighted the implications of Town Council support for guerrilla planting, which by its nature did not involve obtaining permission, or providing evidence of safety measures.

Members considered:

- The importance of partnership working by the group, and a detailed, sustainable management plan.
- A potential enabling role for the Town Council.
- Gaining support from National Highways for bee-friendly roundabouts.
- Measures already in place locally, such as a verge cutting regime that promoted wildlife.
- The loss of consensus if guerrilla planting were to be supported.
- A desire for bee-friendly activity, regardless of whether the award was applied for.
- The existing inclusion of commitments to nature and wildlife in the Town Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and green space management plans.

RECOMMENDED: that the request for support be noted.

8. DIGITAL CURRENCY

The Town Clerk asked members to consider whether any actions were required following the Public Forum addresses on this issue. He further asked members to consider the impact of a currently indefinite weekly booking on Bucky Doo Square by the group campaigning against a digital currency, and in particular that other booking requests such as one by Citizens' Advice had to be declined.

Members discussed:

- A Bank of England statement that the use of cash was unlikely to end in the foreseeable future.
- Support for the retention of cash as a payment option.
- Liaison with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to maintain a cash payment option.
- The impact of power cuts on electronic payment options.
- The Town Council's operations, which all maintained a commitment to cash payment as an option.
- The need for fair and inclusive access to the booking of Bucky Doo Square.
- The impact of uses of the Square, other than charitable and entertainment, on the street market.
- The option open to the digital currency campaign to apply for a charitable stall on the street market.

With the permission of the Chairman, Pat O'Neill relayed her experience of difficulties getting the Leisure Centre to accept cash, which she said was only allowed following a complaint.

RECOMMENDED: that the Town Council takes no view on the digital currency campaign, but supports the need to retain payment choices for its citizens.

RESOLVED: that a market stall be pursued as an alternative option for the digital currency campaign group.

9. WHO PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS TREATY

The Town Clerk asked members to consider whether any actions were required following the Public Forum addresses on this issue.

Members discussed:

- Information circulated by committee members to each other, which cast doubt on claims of over-reach by the WHO, and the extent to which the treaty was binding on governments.
- Concerns about the veracity of comments by Karol Sikora.
- Misleading and biased media coverage of this subject.
- The absence of Town Council powers over the issue, and Dorset Council's responsibility for public health.
- The need for a cohesive strategy to plan for any future pandemic.
- The work of the Town Council in promoting healthy food supply and consumption.

RESOLVED: that those attending the Public Forum to speak on this matter be thanked for their input.

10. COMMUNICATIONS / UPDATES ON OTHER ONGOING ISSUES

Cllr Ian Bark reported that National Highways had requested a meeting about the A35 Sea Road South. The Town Clerk advised that National Highways had been invited to the next meeting of the Planning Committee, and that officers would engage in a pre-meeting.

Cllr Dave Rickard reported that a Bradpole resident had approached him about a problem with nesting gulls on their property.

The Town Surveyor advised that he will visit Barrack Street businesses, to discuss the issues raised during the Public Forum.

The meeting closed at **8.32pm**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 6 September 2023