

Minutes of the meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held on Tuesday  
21 November 2023 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT Cllr Dave Bolwell – Town Mayor (in the Chair)

Cllrs	Ian Bark	Ros Kayes
	Sandra Brown	Gill Massey
	Sarah Carney	Anne Rickard
	Kelvin Clayton	Dave Rickard
	Karen Hunt	Sarah Williams
	Julian Jones	Steve Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Will Austin (Town Clerk), Caroline Pearce (Project Manager & Communities Initiative Officer Community), and four members of the public.

### **OPEN PUBLIC FORUM**

Cheryl, a member of the public, addressed councillors to propose that a facility be set up similar to an initiative by the Christian Fellowship in Dorchester, which she had been involved in. This incorporated a food share, larder, coffee morning, warm space, mental health support, befriending, and financial advice. Cheryl considered that this could be replicated in Bridport.

An ensuing discussion considered:

- Similarities with the current offering at Cupboard Love Foodbank, the Glut Stall, and Community Kitchen in Bridport.
- Examples of people facing hardship and fuel poverty locally.
- A possible visit to Dorchester to see the Christian Fellowship facility.
- Different types of mental health support needed within the community.
- Community engagement to identify needs.

Members thanked Cheryl for her address and advised her to contact the Town Clerk to explore her ideas further.

Three members of the public then addressed councillors about a recent violent incident in the town centre, resulting in serious injury to the young male son of one of the attendees, and emotional harm to his mother. It was explained that the young man had been assaulted by a group of men in an unprovoked attack. Members of the public at the nearby West Dorset Club had intervened but the Police did not attend despite being called, no witness statement had been taken, and CCTV had not been reviewed. The members of the public expressed concern about both the Police response, and about a lack of support for young men in Bridport.

Members discussed:

- Reports from youth workers of an increase in violent incidents.
- Concerns that incidents are fuelled by drugs and alcohol, and sale of alcohol to under-18s.
- A comparison between the lack of Police response to this incident, compared with the four officers who attended a peaceful protest recently.
- Whether additional CCTV was needed in the town centre.

- A need for improved victim support and communication.
- Concerns about Police capacity.
- A need for increased engagement with schools on the issue of violence involving young men. Cllr Sarah Williams advised she would raise this at a forthcoming meeting to be attended by schools.
- The influence of inequality and deprivation as one of the underlying causes of this type of incident.
- The role of the Sir John Colfox Academy in addressing this issue, in particular in its capacity as a champion of Bridport's Rights Respecting Town status.
- A need to involve Dorset Council's Licensing team in sale of alcohol to under 18s.

The Mayor thanked the three members of the public for their attendance.

Cllr Dave Rickard introduced a discussion on the subject of community engagement. He advised that this was an ongoing issue for council meetings, with few members of the public attending. A better approach was needed, and ideas were sought. Members considered:

- Whether a lack of attendance at council meetings could indicate satisfaction, rather than being a negative.
- A desire to change the engagement culture to a proactive one, where the council goes out to the community. The recent outdoor sessions had been a good example.
- The benefits of a working group to consider the issue further.
- Whether council meetings were too formal an environment to attract public engagement.
- Higher public attendance tending to be when there were major issues for discussion, for example the previously proposed pedestrianisation of South Street.
- A lack of awareness and education within schools and the community on civic society.

The Town Clerk advised he would table the issue of community engagement for further discussion at the next meeting of the Best Value & Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

### **31. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs Geoffrey Ackerman, Rose Allwork, Barry Irvine, Maggie Ray and Martin Ray.

The Town Clerk highlighted ongoing medical reasons for non-attendance by Cllrs Barry Irvine, Maggie Ray, and Martin Ray. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that a leave of absence previously granted to Cllrs Barry Irvine, Maggie Ray and Martin Ray, be extended for a further six months.

### **32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**33. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record, and signed by the Town Mayor.

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

There were no questions pursuant to standing order 14(b).

**35. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 6 November 2023 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Dave Bolwell.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 6 November 2023 be received and adopted.

(b) FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 November 2023 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Sarah Williams, who also outlined the reasons for each of the recommendations brought forward for Full Council approval.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 November 2023 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted, as set out below (each recommendation was moved, seconded and declared to be carried):

(Minute 32) FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2023/24 – 2<sup>ND</sup> REVISION

RESOLVED: that the 2<sup>nd</sup> revision of the estimates for the year 2023/24 be approved.

(Minute 33) ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that a bid to establish Bridport as Dorset's First Town of Culture be supported, and a maximum match funding contribution of £15,000 be approved.

(Minute 38) COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

RESOLVED: that the draft governance structure be adopted as the assumed structure for the purposes of transition planning.

(c) ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 8 November 2023 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 8 November 2023 be received and adopted, and that the following recommendation be approved:

(Minute 27) CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

RESOLVED: that the proposed revision of the Climate Emergency Action Plan be approved.

### **36. SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL COMMUNITY**

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Ian Bark, during his term as Town Mayor, had raised the possibility of the Council supporting the Sustainable Palm Oil Community initiative, by signing an associated pledge. The matter was now being tabled for member consideration.

Cllr Ian Bark outlined the background to the initiative, which sought to address the wildlife and biodiversity impacts of palm oil production, with a commitment to using only palm oil from sustainable sources.

Members discussed:

- Whether the matter should be discussed in more detail by the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee.
- Whether palm oil from sustainable sources may also have adverse consequences.

RESOLVED: that a decision on support for the Sustainable Palm Oil Community be referred to the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee.

### **37. TOWN CRIER'S REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Crier.

RESOLVED: that the Town Crier be thanked for his work, and that his report be noted.

### **38. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM**

RESOLVED: that the subject for the next Open Public Forum at the next meeting on 23 January 2024 shall be "young people's experience of living in Bridport, and ideas for improvement", led by Cllrs Ian Bark and Kelvin Clayton.

### **39. COMMUNICATIONS**

The following items were reported for information:

The Town Mayor reported his list of engagements, ENCL: 3851.

The Town Clerk reported that a consultation by Dorset Council on a proposed 20mph zone for the town centre had elicited 122 responses, with 81 (66.4%) in support, 33 (27.0%) against and 8 (6.6%) general comments. The next stage would

be an assessment as to whether the objections are considered substantial, and a committee decision, if required.

Cllr Sarah Carney asked whether there would be media engagement to promote the Town of Culture initiative. The Town Clerk advised that such activity would take place if and when the Town of Culture submission was approved.

The meeting closed at **8:50pm**

**The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 23 January 2024**