

Minutes of the meeting of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Monday 9 September 2024 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Paddy Mooney

Cllrs: Nigel Amor Ann Langridge
 Rob Casey Nigel Rawlings
 Andrew Holdridge Anne Rickard
 Anna Killick Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Cllrs Sarah Carney and Dave Rickard, Will Austin (Town Clerk), Paul Fuszard (Finance and Office Manager) Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor, via Zoom), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager), and John West (Bridport Area Development Trust).

PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public spoke at the Public Forum.

19. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Bark.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ann Langridge left the room during the Bridport Youth & Community Centre grant discussion and decision (minute 22) as a fundraiser for that organisation.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 10 June 2024 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: that item 10 on the agenda, West Bay Discovery Centre, be brought forward as the next business.

22. WEST BAY DISCOVERY CENTRE

John West (Bridport Area Development Trust (BADT), for West Bay Discovery Centre) was invited to join the meeting and set out the background to discussions with the Town Council ahead of the transfer of the building to Bridport Communities Trust, and the transfer of its operation to Bridport Town Council. He thanked all involved in the three years' work on the transfers, which had been delayed by both the pandemic and the more recent Community Governance Review. The transfer had however been carefully considered and the BADT and Town Council had reached agreement on the arrangements. John would continue to be involved as Chair of a new 'Friends of West Bay Discovery Centre' group. He was pleased that the transfer would offer future resilience to the Centre, and that the Mayor had chosen it as one of the venues for the forthcoming Civic Day.

John West left the meeting at this point (7.10pm).

The Town Clerk presented the terms of an agreement between the BADT and the Town Council setting out the handover arrangements, and asked members to give it their approval.

RESOLVED that the arrangements for the transfer of both West Bay Discovery Centre and the management of the facility from 1 October 2024 be noted.

RESOLVED: that the agreement between the Town Council and the BADT accompanying the transfer be received and approved.

23. **BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 3 September 2024 be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(Min: 14) TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO SMALLER BODIES 2024/25

| Applicant and Purpose of Grant | Award (£) |
|--|------------------|
| St. Catherine's Pre School - Weldmar's Stampede by the Sea and their linked learning programme; and adopting one of the baby elephants that will form part of the art trail. | 250 |
| Equintervention - 20 subsidised sessions available to those experiencing mental health including: dementia, trauma, anxiety, autism & oppositional defiance disorder and ADHD. | 500 |
| Age UK North, South & West Dorset - Assist our Welfare Benefit provision in Bridport. | 500 |
| The Stepping Out Cancer Rehabilitation Group - An exercise and wellbeing programme to help members with their recovery, during and after receiving a diagnosis of cancer. | 500 |
| ASCape - A fortnightly 75-minute after school art club for Autistic and/or socially anxious children aged 12-17, with local artist Kathy Kelly. ASCape's aim as a charity is to support these children, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis. | 500 |
| Home-Start Wessex - To support our expansion into a new catchment of West Dorset, developing services to support vulnerable families with young children, filling the gap left by the closure of Home-Start West Dorset (HSWD) in Oct' 2023. | 950 |
| The Bank of Dreams & Nightmares - The RESONATE event aims to give marginalised groups; who may otherwise be excluded from regular arts activities because of rural isolation, social exclusion or lack of prior engagement in the cultural community; broader skills and more confidence in their creative writing skills. | 500 |
| Bridport Millennium Green Trust - To continue to improve the entrance to the footpath up Coneygar Hill from Mountfield and to clear the adjacent area surrounding the grotto/archway. | 500 |
| Bridport Literary Festival - An event with the UK Children's Laureate, past or present. This year we are happy to have secured Joseph Coelho as our main school's event. This comes at greater cost, but we believe it really is worth it as he is such a widely respected and well-known poet and children's author, who promises to inspire students both to read, and write creatively. | 500 |
| B Sharp - Bridport Jams, a weekly out-of-school music making project for young people ages 11-18. We used to run this group for teenagers but had to stop during the pandemic. We would | 500 |

| Applicant and Purpose of Grant | Award (£) |
|--|------------------|
| like to start this up again, as an opportunity for teenagers to meet up and play music together in a safe, supportive environment. | |
| West Bay Community Forum - Run by a committee on behalf of members to look at issues in and around West Bay, to be raised with relevant bodies. Twice a year we have an open members' meeting, usually with a speaker to allow members to meet up and discuss anything that the forum can help with. | 100 |
| Bridport Youth Dance – Art and Dance in the Landscape initiative - Choreography Geography 2025 – a site specific performance in the local rural/coastal landscape in September 2025. This colourful spectacle will involve young dancers from the BYD contemporary programme, BYD alumni and be intergenerational. | 500 |
| Bridport Youth Dance – Education & development programme. This includes the after school programme and 21 st annual production at the Electric Palace in March 2025. | 500 |
| Bridport Boys Dance - Workshops led by a professional dancer and choreographer for the specific boys dance programme. | 350 |
| Friends of the Lyric CIC - HERSONG III is a performance platform for young women and girls to perform new work co-produced with TOCIYA Town of Culture young adult group – in collaboration with BSharp. bacStage, Youth Centre, TOCIYA connections, Ascape, Ripple Workshop. | 400 |
| Total Small Grants | £7,050 |

RESOLVED: that

- (i) the above grants be approved under the General Power of Competence, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Home-Start Wessex – the grant amount is considered exceptional in the circumstances and the organisation should not expect repeat funding of this order in future; and
 - b. West Bay Community Forum – the grant is not guaranteed to be repeated and the group should seek alternative funding.
- (ii) The following applications be not supported at this time:
 - a. Loders Youth Club – members suggested approaching Loders Parish Council.
 - b. Electric Backroom Studio – insufficient information was provided to allow a satisfactory assessment against grant criteria.
 - c. Bridport and District Citizens Advice – considered to be an extension of the larger Service Level Agreement grant.
- (iii) Unsuccessful applicants be reminded that the West Bay Car Boot Sale grants scheme opens for applications in November 2024.

(Min: 15) TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LARGER BODIES 2024/25

| Organisation | Amount |
|---|---------------|
| Bridport Citizens Advice | £10,000 |
| Bridport Arts Centre | £7,500 |
| Bridport Leisure Centre | £5,000 |
| Bridport Youth & Community Centre | £30,000 |
| Bridport Museum | £7,500 |
| Literary & Scientific Institute (Bridport Area Development Trust) | £6,250 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 2020 Skate & Ride | £5,000 |
| Friends of the Lyric Theatre CIC | £5,000 |
| Precision Football Arena | £3,000 |
| Total | £79,250 |

- (i) that Bridport Arts Centre be asked to demonstrate community use and benefit including for 'hard to reach' communities.

Members discussed a recommendation in respect of Bridport Youth & Community Centre, noting its current financial difficulties, possible fundraising opportunities including subscriptions and a 100 Club. Concern was expressed that any fundraising support should be dependent on resolving the current issues and developing a resilient plan for the future.

Cllr Ann Langridge declared an interest as a fundraiser for the Trust, and left the meeting prior to a vote on funding.

- (ii) that funding for Bridport Youth & Community Centre be set at £30,000 for the first year of the agreement only, and that any future award be dependent on robust evidence to show the stabilisation of the financial position.
- (iii) that the Bridport Area Development Trust be required to provide a business plan for the LSi prior to next review of the Service Level Agreement.
- (iv) two further agreements with Pymore Village Management Company, and the Allington Hill, Cooper's Wood and Field Community Group be delegated to the Chair, Leader and Council representative to the groups, with any resulting awards estimated to be a combined cost of £1,250.

24. ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk reported that there were no recommendations arising from the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 4 September 2024.

25. MARKET AND BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

The notes of the Market & Business Liaison Working Group held on 18 June 2024 were presented. There were no recommendations arising from the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Market & Business Liaison Working Group held on 18 June 2024 be received and noted.

26. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2024/25 – 1st REVISION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3920.

The Town Clerk and the Finance & Office Manager summarised the report, which set out the financial position after the first five months of 2024/25, including any significant deviations from the profile budget as a percentage of the annual totals. Although the overall situation looked satisfactory after this first quarter, it was noted that significant additional pressures were expected, including a major increase in insurance costs, the previously agreed increases in SLA-supported funding, and match funding for improvements at Bridport Football Club Car Park. These alone would place a strain on the

council's reserve funding, if not matched by savings elsewhere and members were asked to note this position when considering any new funding requests, and when setting a budget for 2025/26.

Following discussion of future spending and the maintenance of an appropriate level of reserves, it was

RECOMMENDED: that the 1st revision of the estimates for the year 2024/25 be approved.

27. BUDGET PLANNING 2024/25

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL 3921.

The Town Clerk reported on the proposed process and timetable for setting the Council's budget for 2025/26, and key issues for consideration. He further advised that membership of the Budget Working Group would need to be reviewed. Following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED: that

- (i) membership of the Budget Working Group shall be Cllrs Ian Bark, Andrew Holdridge, Ann Langridge, Paddy Mooney and Sarah Williams; and
- (ii) further nominations be invited at the next Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED: that the timetable for setting the budget be approved.

28. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE SURVEYOR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3922. The Town Surveyor reported as follows:

The Grove

The building was now at capacity, with the new Tenants Hartleys taking the whole of the 2nd floor and a meeting room on the ground floor, and Gillingham's taking the whole of the 1st floor, with a ground floor meeting room. Both new tenants had signed long leases. The Museum had also taken the last remaining ground floor room, giving them five rooms until such time that they could move back to the Coach House in Gundry Lane. The building had been substantially upgraded as fit for a multi-occupancy building, and 18 parking spaces were rented to individuals and businesses.

A35 Proposed Cycleway and Crossing at Pasture Way

The Town Surveyor was moving forward with this as a priority scheme and works, in conjunction with Dorset Council and National Highways over funding.

Bridport Football Club Car Park

Tenders had been found to be higher than expected for improvement works at the car park. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the Town Surveyor be delegated to revisit the proposal, in light of the tenders received.

Works to Bucky Doo Square

The existing lamp column was to be relocated, and fitted with a feeder pillar, with electric connections for Christmas lighting. A new feeder pillar to run music and events on Bucky Doo was included in the works, which would take place in October 2024.

Cemetery Gates

The existing gates at the East Road entrance were in disrepair and repairs by a specialist wrought iron company at a cost of £2,400 would be considered at a later date, if budgets allowed.

Mountfield External Fire Escape Stairs

There was a need to replace corroded steps and platform areas, and to replace the handrail. These works had been identified in the annual Health & Safety Audit at a cost of £4,100 and would be considered at a later date, as and when budgets allowed.

St Mary's Playing Fields

Proposed works to extend paths at St Mary's to create a better surface for Parkrun and other users through the winter, at an estimated cost of £3,400 would be considered as and when budgets allowed.

Plottingham Skate Park

Long-term plans to replace the Skate Park were not considered affordable at present, and given the poor state of the existing facility, an intermediate replacement costing £32,316 was proposed, with funding split between revenue budgets and earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED: that funding of £32,316 for an intermediate solution at the skate park be approved.

Bridport WI Hall Works

Planning permission was in place for WI Hall improvements, and because of the usage and high demand for the venue, it was proposed to complete the work in stages, to limit the time the hall is closed. Cost and timing information would be worked up and reported to committee for approval.

Court Orchard Play Area

The first stage of the improvement scheme had been delivered, with the official opening scheduled for September. It was now the intention to work with the steering group, made up of local residents, to deliver the next stages, subject to finance and approval by committee.

Electric Power Hand Tools

A demonstration of electric equipment had been arranged with Kress Tools, their agent being Small Engine Services in Bridport. It was proposed to proceed initially with one of the following pieces of machinery: one strimmer, one mower, one backpack blower, two 240Kwh batteries, two 660Wh batteries and one Van Power recharging station. A charging station would be installed at the Plottingham workshop, alongside an existing array of handheld power tools, the workshop having solar panels feeding into the system. If this proved successful, replacement of power tools with electric would be considered, as older redundant equipment was replaced.

RESOLVED: that the cost of electric equipment, estimated at £15,000, be deferred until such time as budgets allow.

Sitting out Licences

When the Council took over administration of Sitting Out Licences from Dorset Council in 2019, this allowed the Town Council to fully integrate the food outlets and cafes into the market scene, with no loss of revenue. The annual charges at the time were £303 for the licence. During the pandemic, the government introduced a maximum charge of £100 along with other measures to support the hospitality industry. This restriction was expected

to end at the end of September and the Town Council would be able to set new fees. Confirmation from Dorset Council of their policy was needed prior to setting new charges, as the Town Council was, in effect, acting as their licensing agent. Once received, officers would review the rates and charges for the future, including the possibility of a three-tier system, with a charge according to the extent of space occupied. If the amended policy was received from Dorset Council prior to the next meeting, members may be asked to consider a formal proposal.

Asker Meadows Pedestrian Gates

To improve access arrangements and ensure the safe confinement of livestock, four new 'kissing gates' were being considered for installation at the meadow.

West Bay Temporary Toilets

Dorset Council had advised that repairs to the harbour wall would not now commence until Autumn 2025, and that the public toilets at The Mound would consequently be closed for a further extended period. An extension to the current arrangements, allowing siting of temporary toilets on Fisherman's Green, was under discussion.

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

29. BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Town Clerk reminded members to send submissions for inclusion in the five-year plan, to the Project Manager by 23 September 2024.

30. DORSET COUNCIL – BIG CONVERSATION

The Town Clerk reported that a draft response to Dorset Council's survey on its proposed corporate plan would be tabled for consideration at the next Full Council meeting.

31. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

Consideration was given to ENCL: 3923, showing that the external auditor had offered no adverse comment in its report on the Bradpole Parish Council Annual Governance & Accountability Return. The Town Clerk asked members to approve the report of the external auditor, BDO.

Other returns would be tabled as and when the auditor's reports on former parish councils and Bridport Town Council, were received.

RESOLVED: that the conclusion of the audit for Bradpole Parish Council for 2023/24 be noted and that Sandy Goldsmith and Paul Fuszard be thanked for their efforts in achieving this outcome.

RECOMMENDED: that the report of the external auditor for the former Bradpole Parish Council for 2023/24 be received and approved.

32. INSURANCE

The Town Clerk reported that a new year 3 year agreement had begun, with our existing insurers, following a competitive process, noting a large increase in premium due to the extended council area and an increase in rates. Due to the timing of renewal this agreement had been approved under delegation by the Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

33. REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED: that Full Council be requested to:

- (i) elect Town Council representatives to: Allington Hill & Cooper's Wood & Field Community Group, Magna Housing, Precision Football Arena and Pymore Village Management Company.
- (ii) approve a recommendation of the Planning Committee that Cllr Andy Holdridge be elected as representative to National Highways.

34. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Town Clerk presented List 2 of the 2024/25 accounts, in the sum of £484,683.19, which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that Payment List 2 of 2024/25 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

35. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

36. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED: that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

37. STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk updated members on a review of staffing, ENCL: 3924, and asked that the proposals therein be approved. These included the reallocation of a number of duties within the existing staff, and the creation of two new posts, Works Manager and Apprentice Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the proposals contained in the report be approved.

38. PROPERTY MATTERS

There was nothing to report.

The meeting closed at 9:35pm.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 11 November 2024