

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held in Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 5 March 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Kelvin Clayton (Chairman)

Ian Bark	Dave Rickard
Bridget Bolwell	Bev Thornton
Jonathan Bourbon	Steve Williams
Julian Jones	David Worthington
Anne Rickard	

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Ann Langridge (as observer), 5 members of the public, Caroline Pearce (Project Manager), David Dixon (Project Manager) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

PUBLIC FORUM

Penny Petra Hughes spoke to remind councillors of the sensitivity to microwave towers, which she advised caused rashes and headaches. Research showed a severe sensitivity. One school had banned the towers, and others had too. Mitigation measures included use of ethernet cables to the router, Faraday cages and cloths. Penny Petra said she would not want too many towers in public places.

The Chairman thanked Penny Petra for her input.

41. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ian Bark declared an interest in agenda item 5, Jurassic Amateur Boxing Club, as Chair of the Bridport Youth & Community Centre Trust, which acted as club landlord.

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 January 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. BRIDPORT 24 – TOWN OF CULTURE EVALUATION

The Project Manager introduced an evaluation of the Town of Culture initiative, ENCL: 3982, and recapped on the programme. The evaluation report would need approval for submission to funders, to secure the final grant payments. The report would also act as a tool for use by other towns. It was hoped that the initiative would leave a legacy, setting in train new events and activities for the future.

A summary video was shown.

Members welcomed the report and video, and discussed:

- The success of the project in drawing a wider social demographic into culture;

- The emergence of the youth group TOCIYA;
- The challenges of engaging young people;
- The need for an ongoing partnership of cultural organisations, in order to secure a legacy;
- The potential for further Arts Council funding;
- Difficulties in assessing the demography of the 8,000 to 10,000 people engaged;
- Audiences comprising 43% new attendees;
- A good spread of participants shown by a postcode heat map;
- The success of the George Biles Exhibition in attracting new visitors to the Arts Centre and Museum;
- A handover to Weymouth and Portland as the next Dorset Town of Culture; and
- The importance of learning lessons from the initiative.

RESOLVED: that the Town of Culture evaluation report be approved for submission.

RESOLVED: that Archie Rowell and Elliot Millson be thanked for and congratulated on their video production.

45. JURASSIC AMATEUR BOXING CLUB

Andy Jackson and Sarah Thorpe presented a £5,000 funding request on behalf of the club, setting out the background as follows:

- Bridport Boxing Club had operated for many years but the leader had retired.
- A lack of investment meant it was not sustainable in its current form, and it was in need of regeneration.
- The name would be changed to Jurassic Amateur Boxing Club (JAB Club) and it would be a new club and a registered charity.
- The aim was to form a legacy for future generations.
- Benefits would be beyond sport, into mental health, support, discipline, confidence, leadership, safe space, camaraderie and fitness.
- The club would attract all ages, those living with disadvantage, including broken families, and would cover Bridport and the surrounding area.
- The plan was to remain at the Youth & Community Centre.
- A large amount of equipment needed replacement, including for safety reasons.

Members discussed:

- The affordability or otherwise to the Town Council of a £5,000 contribution;
- Concerns about the dangers of boxing, and counter-arguments setting out the relative safety compared with some other sports, and the wider benefits;
- Whether the benefits of the club outweighed the risks; and
- The value of the club to the community.
- The need for a detailed business plan.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the request be approved in principle.

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that the Committee consider a funding contribution.

At the request of members, the vote is recorded as 7 in favour, 1 against, and 1 abstention.

46. COOPERS WOOD & FIELD MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3984, setting out a proposal for the development of a management plan, led by the Allington Hillbillies with Town Council support. The Project Manager summarised the report and members considered:

- Town Council representation at consultation events. Cllrs Bev Thornton and Jonathan Bourbon advised they were liaising as the designated representatives;
- Officer capacity to support production of the plan; and
- The welcome and excellent work of the Hillbillies.

RESOLVED: that the offer from Allington Hill, Coopers Wood & Field Community Group (the “Allington Hillbillies”), to undertake a review of the Coopers Wood & Field Management Plan be accepted, and that support by councillors and officers be provided as required.

47. WRITING BOX BRIDPORT

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3986, setting out a proposal for the use of two phone kiosks in West Street as creative writing venues operated by the Bridport Writers’ Network, and requesting that the Town Council agree to adopt the kiosks.

Speaking on behalf of the Bridport Writers’ Network, Kim Squirrell reported that:

- She was a writer, artist and tutor, who had missed working with the community and had set up the Bridport Writers’ Network in partnership with the Bridport Prize;
- The network used a WhatsApp group to hear about support needs;
- A proposal to use the kiosks had been developed from an initial idea and had been agreed by the core group of the network;
- The proposal had been included in the report circulated with the agenda;
- The Bank of Dreams & Nightmares had been unable to take on the project, so the network wanted to;
- Adoption of the kiosks had to be by a council or charity, and the network wanted the council to agree this, along with insurance for the kiosks;
- The kiosks would be not only for creative writing, but also to give focus, aid literacy, and provide a venue for creative events;
- There would be links with the Library and Museum;
- A volunteer had been identified for opening and locking of the kiosks; and
- The network was looking to meet all other costs.

Members discussed:

- The potential benefits to young people’s writing;
- Community engagement on the proposal, perhaps by holding a stall adjacent to the kiosks;
- Whether such small spaces were suitable for the proposed purpose, and the possible lack of privacy;
- Whether the kiosks needed protection as heritage assets;

- The proposed uses as set out in the report;
- Similarities with other community uses of kiosks;
- A need to demonstrate community support;
- The impact on the street market stalls in that location; and
- A need for more detailed development of the proposal and a sustainable business plan.

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that the request be supported, subject to provision of a detailed and sustainable business plan at the June meeting of the committee.

48. COMMUNITY BUS SERVICES

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3986, setting out a proposal to proceed with a community bus pilot running between Bridport and West Bay at weekends, and proposing that the existing Service 7 be supported by the negotiation of a three-year agreement with Dorset Community Transport.

In respect of the bus pilot, members discussed:

- The proposed route from the town centre to West Bay;
- The viability of the service at the end of the 40-week pilot operation;
- The need to emphasise that this was a pilot service, with no guarantee of continuation;
- The frequency of the service, proposed to be half-hourly; and
- The need for extensive promotion.

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee that:

- (i) the Council enters into grant agreements with Western Gateway Sub-Regional Transport Body and (subject to approval) Dorset Council for funding for a pilot bus service, and into a contractual arrangement with Dorset Community Transport for delivery.
- (ii) planning and delivery of the pilot be delegated to the Town Clerk, working in conjunction with relevant officers.

In respect of Service 7, members recognised the benefits of a longer-term agreement in support of the round-town service, as this would allow recruitment of a dedicated driver. There being no additional financial impact, it was therefore

RESOLVED: that the council enter into a three-year agreement with Dorset Community Transport for the operation of Service 7.

49. WELDMAR HOSPICECARE

The Chairman reported that NHS Dorset was reviewing support of £400,000 for Weldmar's Hospice at Home service. Weymouth Town Council had agreed a letter of support for continuation of the service and it was proposed that the Town Council follow suit.

RESOLVED: that a letter of support be sent, under delegation to the Chairman and Clerk.

50. PROJECT UPDATES

Members considered a report of the Project Managers, ENCL: 3987, setting out updates on a range of projects within the committee's remit. Members discussed:

- Energy Champions – an additional solar panel project was clarified;
- Neighbourhood Plan – the timetable for a light review was confirmed; and
- Water quality – concerns that a statutory requirement to keep rivers clean was not being addressed. It was confirmed that the group CROWD was active in lobbying and engaging with Wessex Water.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

51. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chairman reported that he had met with the Leisure Centre. There had been changes at the Trust, with a new Chair and Vice-Chair. Membership was growing and had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. New projects included two Padel courts, and treatment rooms. The swimming pool was losing £250,000 a year, and this would likely rise to £300,000 when gas contracts ended. There were plans to offset the losses, including new boilers.

Members discussed the funding situation, including a suggestion that the Trust consider charging for parking.

Members further received and considered a report from Cllr Sarah Carney on activity on the subject of affordable housing. Cllr Ian Bark thanked Cllrs Sarah Carney, Anna Killick, and Paddy Mooney for their work.

RESOLVED: that the reports from outside bodies be noted.

52. COMMUNICATIONS/UPDATES FOR INFORMATION

Cllr Bev Thornton reported on her work in pursuit of a council five-year plan objective in respect of emergency homeless provision:

- She had found 14 people in emergency homelessness, since moving to Bridport three years previously;
- She had worked with Cllr Ann Langridge and Exeter City Council to find out about 'Amazing Grace' pods for emergency homelessness. She had identified concerns that there was no water supply, mould, and cramped conditions. Outreach was however good, and there was a security guard;
- There was no provision in Bridport, whilst Weymouth was better, and this imbalance needed addressing;
- Collaboration across groups was needed; and
- A report would be produced in due course, setting out project support needs.

The Chairman gave an update on Otter Bend.

The Town Clerk asked for informal indications of support or otherwise, for a proposal from a resident to bring a 'Bombed Door' art installation to Bridport. This was a real, war-damaged door recovered from Ukraine and displayed as artwork. Members

indicated concerns that it may trigger trauma amongst refugees living locally, and questioned what role the Town Council was being asked to play. Overall, the indication was one of neutrality on the proposal, and that support would not be forthcoming, unless Ukrainian residents locally gave their full blessing.

The Town Clerk offered his thanks to David Dixon, Project Manager, who had given notice of his resignation after eight years' service. David had been integral to key projects including the Neighbourhood Plan, Climate Action Plan, the Bridport Investment Plan and two five-year council plans. Members echoed the gratitude.

The meeting closed at **8.46pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 4 June 2025