

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE  
of Bridport Town Council held in Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 4 June 2025  
at 7.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Dave Rickard (Chairman from item 2)

Bridget Bolwell	Anne Rickard
Jonathan Bourbon	Bev Thornton
Kelvin Clayton	Steve Williams
Julian Jones	David Worthington

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Ian Bark (Leader ex officio), Cllr Paddy Mooney, Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager), Will Austin (Town Clerk), and 3 members of the public.

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

A local resident addressed members in respect of the Old Railway Line. He had engaged in correspondence with the Town Council on the subject and was part of a group that had established that sales of land were taking place. He advised that his attendance at the meeting was to thank the council for the drafting of a management plan for the area. His wish was to look forward rather than back, and he considered the draft plan to be a good step. The resident advised that consultation with local people and visitors, as users of the path, would be important, as many wanted to protect and preserve the area as part of the Jurassic Coast landscape. He further advised that he wanted to see a solution that operated in the same way as other areas, with management supported by voluntary groups. He considered the fences along the bridleway to be unfortunate as they were too close to the path and made it unpleasant.

The resident posed the following questions:

- Regarding the maintenance regime outlined in the draft plan which appeared to be more than at present, how was this derived?
- Would maintenance be dependent on self-generating income and if so, was this the case for other areas?
- A draft questionnaire question mentioning “vital funds” was leading. Could this be made more neutral?

Responding to the first question, the Town Surveyor advised that he had written the draft plan in line with others for Town Council land. It divided the land into six areas, each with its own maintenance needs. This made the maintenance regime somewhat involved but the council was keen to meet public expectations along the length of the land. A letter drop was planned as part of the consultation, and the consultation itself would need to reflect on the challenges of maintenance and unauthorised access point inherited when the Town Council acquired the land. The Town Surveyor was pleased to see the emergence of a community group and looked forward to further engagement.

Responding to the second and third questions, the Town Clerk advised that maintenance was not dependent on income generated from the land, but that the costs would need to be met somehow. As with other aspects of the council's work, options that would need consideration through consultation included increased Council Tax, reductions in service elsewhere, cost savings, external fundraising, and sale of land. The Clerk agreed that the draft question referring to 'vital funds' should be re-worded to reflect the range of funding options.

Those present engaged in discussion regarding historic and future management and maintenance, land ownership, and fencing that had been erected.

Another resident asked about a proposed composter to be located at the meadows, and asked whether this was necessary. She was not privy to the financial details, but questioned the addition of such a facility when an alternative existed at Broomhills Recycling Centre, less than one mile away.

The Town Surveyor advised that the idea was to recycle grass from council grounds maintenance work, and to turn this into compost for use by allotment holders and others. The council was considered a commercial organisation for the purposes of depositing at Broomhills so there would be a cost. The idea might not proceed, but the council would still need to find a cost-effective way of disposing of grass cuttings.

Attendees considered the advantages, disadvantages, costs, and challenges of the composter.

The outgoing committee chair, Cllr Kelvin Clayton, thanked those present for their input.

#### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED: that Cllr Dave Rickard be elected Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

Cllr Dave Rickard assumed the Chair. He and the Town Clerk thanked Cllr Kelvin Clayton for his longstanding work as the previous Chair.

#### **2. APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

RESOLVED: that Cllr David Worthington be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

## 5. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 2025 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Town Clerk noted a concern from Cllr Julian Jones that commentary on the Public Forum prior to the previous meeting could be regarded as presenting public input as fact, without verification.

## 6. **TOWN SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

Members considered a report of the Town Surveyor, ENCL: 4016, in respect of the following:

- (i) A notification from Dorset Council that the route of Public Right of Way W1/3 would not be changed.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

- (ii) Proposals to acquire land to the Rear of Badger Row from Dorset Council, for allotments.

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that (i) land at Badger Row be acquired in accordance with the Allotments Act 1908, and (ii) the proposed uses be approved.

- (iii) A review of a previous decision to acquire Jellyfields, and Bothenhampton Nature Reserve as asset transfers from Dorset Council. After discussion of the timings, costs, local support, ecology, nature and wildlife preservation, it was then

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that the asset transfer of Jellyfields, and Bothenhampton Nature Reserve, be pursued as previously agreed, under delegation to the Town Surveyor and Property Manager.

- (iv) A renewal of an agreement between the council and Bridport Millennium Green Trust, governing the respective responsibilities in relation to Bridport Millennium Green.

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that the draft agreement between Bridport Town Council and Bridport Millennium Green Trust be approved.

- (v) A draft agreement with the Friends of the River Flyfishers governing angling on the Rivers Brit and Asker. Members discussed the level of support for, and opposition to angling in local rivers, the level of demand, the impact of fly fishing, and the fish population, and it was then

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that further background investigation be carried out in respect of the issues raised by the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee in respect of a draft agreement with Friends of the River Flyfishers, and a further report be provided before any agreement is approved.

(vi) A draft management plan for the Burton Road to West Bay Trailway, for public consultation. The Town Surveyor advised that the draft, written with the help of the Property Manager, split the land into six areas and followed the approach established for similar plans in place for other council-managed land. Further management plans remained outstanding but this one was considered a priority given the public interest expressed. Reflecting on a question posed during the Public Forum, the Town Surveyor advised he would review the consultation question about funding for maintenance. The plan would be subject to wide engagement, and would seek a way forward that had community support. Members considered the importance of the environment in how the land was managed, the property issues that would need consideration by Finance & General Purposes Committee, the arguments for and against sale of parts of the land, and the welcome inclusion of wildflower planting in the draft. It was then

RECOMMENDED to Finance & General Purposes Committee: that the draft management plan for the Burton Road to West Bay Trailway be approved for consultation, subject to incorporation of the matters raised in discussion at the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee.

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

## **7. PROJECT UPDATES**

The Town Clerk introduced a report on current projects within the committee's remit, ENCL: 4017, and invited members to raise matters by exception.

Members considered whether river water quality was considered satisfactory in Bridport, and asked that a report on emergency and resilience work be provided to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS / UPDATES FOR INFORMATION**

The Town Surveyor reported that he had engaged with residents of the area known as Otter Bend who had expressed concern about volunteer activity. A management plan was needed, and this would be developed in conjunction with both residents and volunteers.

Cllr Ian Bark noted the need for public awareness of the council's approach to land management.

The meeting closed at **7.57pm**

**The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 3 September 2025**