

Minutes of the ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE
of Bridport Town Council held in Mountfield, Bridport on Wednesday 7 January 2026
at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs: Dave Rickard (Chairman)

Kelvin Clayton
Julian Jones
Anne Rickard

Bev Thornton
Steve Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Caroline Pearce (Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer) and Sergeant Mike Brown, Dorset Police

PUBLIC FORUM

Dorset Police: Sergeant Mike Brown was welcomed by the Chair. The Sergeant provided updates on police issues and initiatives in Bridport including:

- The expansion of the neighbourhood policing team from two to four officers.
- Disappointment at the decision to withdraw police presence from remembrance parades – it was noted that the Sergeant had requested a review of that decision ahead of the next Remembrance Day event.
- Concerns about e-bikes and e-scooters, with an explanation of possible tactics to address the issues including overcoming challenges.
- A higher rate than elsewhere in the County of successful drug warrants in Bridport due to the proactive neighbourhood team. It was explained that the drug issue in Bridport was not disproportionate to elsewhere in Dorset, but that excellent results were due to a focussed team acting on intelligence.
- Underreporting of shoplifting – to be addressed by the neighbourhood team.
- No concerning crime trends.

The Sergeant answered questions about disruption to neighbours caused by a particular property and explained the resolutions which had been achieved.

Discussion took place regarding the request to lock the gates to Borough Gardens, and it was noted that a response from the housing association to the residents was awaited.

7.18pm Sergeant Mike Smith left the meeting and did not return

There were no members of the press or public present.

18. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bridget Bolwell, Jonathan Bourbon and David Worthington.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 September 2025 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman (it was noted that the meeting that had been due to take place in November had been cancelled).

21. WEST BAY BUS – REQUESTING CONTRIBUTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer, ENCL: 4074. The Project Manager explained that she had been informed shortly before the meeting that the underspend in the grant for the pilot project from Dorset Council could be carried over into the new financial year, so funding contribution requirement for 2026/27 would be £1,500 as previously anticipated by the Budget Working Group, not the £2,650 as set out in the report to this Committee. It was noted that the fare income so far was higher than anticipated and West Dorset Commons would be encouraged to take on the project management of the project once the group is fully constituted.

Members supported the contribution of £1,500 from Bridport Town Council with a view to the service being extended with this support until the end of October half term 2026. They also supported delegating the preparation of the final timetable to the Project Manager following consultation with the relevant users and seeing passenger data.

RESOLVED: (1) that Finance & General Purposes Committee be recommended to support a contribution from the Town Council of £1,500 towards the West Bay Bus project in 2026/27 as included in the 2026/27 proposed budget; (2) that the support for West Bay Bus be extended to the end of the October half term 2026, with a view to handing over project management responsibility to West Dorset Commons ahead of that date; and (3) that the times/timetable of the bus be delegated to the Project Manager following consultation with the relevant users.

22. TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer, ENCL: 4075. The Project Manager explained that the project was a representation of the town centre and was up to date as of December, but premises do change fairly frequently.

Members discussed the responses which included the expectation for the creative use of empty shops, which was unfortunately out of the Town Council's control and traffic congestion at the Town Hall junction. It was noted that retailers had indicated that they plan to change their business within in the forthcoming year and the Project Manager explained that this was due to reasons such as: change to include more online sales; selling the business; retirement or relocating.

It was noted that the Town Centre Health Check forms part of the work and consultation of Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. Report recommendations can inform ongoing work and potential projects.

RESOLVED: that the Town Centre Health Check Report be noted and that the Project Manager be thanked for all her hard work.

23. PROJECT UPDATES

Consideration was given to a report of the Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer, ENCL: 4076.

The Project Manager summarised the report and indicated that a high proportion of her time had been invested in the review of the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan which would be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Joint Councils Committee meeting at the end of January. It was reported that Dorset Council have reviewed the rationale presented in the revised BANP and from their perspective the BANP can go forward and be subject to Examination, and subject to the view of the Examiner, should not require a referendum.

RESOLVED: that update be noted.

24. DORSET COAST FORUM CONFERENCES FEEDBACK

Cllr Dave Rickard reported that he had attended the annual conference of the Dorset Coast Forum and provided feedback on the event:

- Professor Brunsden had campaigned for the Jurassic Coast to be given World Heritage Status and was a co-founder of the Dorset Coast Forum which encompasses:
- Coastal management
- Tourism
- Fossils (including education, collection and identification)
- Liaison with Natural England
- Liaison with schools and youth
- Marine projects
- Cliff stabilisation
- Future coastal projects

The event was a 30th anniversary celebration event about the forum's achievement and a report on the work would soon be published.

RESOLVED: that update be noted.

25. DORSET INCLUSIVE BLUE SPACES PROJECT PLAN

Consideration was given to ENCL: 4077. Discussion took place regarding the Dorset Inclusive Blue Spaces Project Plan and the request for Bridport Town Council to be a project partner.

RESOLVED: (1) that Dorset Town Council agrees to be a project partner in the Dorset Inclusive Blue Spaces Project Plan; (2) that that Town Council engage in the feasibility study; and (3) that Cllr Dave Rickard be nominated as the contact for the initiative and that the role be included on the "Representative on Outside Bodies" decision at the Annual Town Meeting.

26. COMMUNICATIONS/UPDATES FOR INFORMATION

There were no items for communication or updates for information.

27. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity of the remaining agenda items would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. *Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s3.*

28. ASKER MEADOWS

Consideration was given to a request from Brit Valley Project, ENCL: 4078.

RESOLVED: (1) that the land management and access plan be noted; and (2) that the in-principle agreement be agreed and signed.

29. LAND AT BACK RIVERS LANE

A matter regarding land in the area was reported for information only.

RESOLVED: that the matter be noted.

The meeting closed at **8.20pm**.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 4 March 2026