

Minutes of the meeting of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Monday 12 January 2026 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Paddy Mooney

Cllrs:	Nigel Amor	Anna Killick
	Dave Bolwell (ex-officio)	Ann Langridge
	Rob Casey	Dave Rickard
	Andrew Holdridge	Sarah Williams

Also present: Cllr Ian Bark

In attendance: Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), Lisa Pinch (Finance and Office Manager), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager) and one member of the public.

PUBLIC FORUM

The former Town Clerk spoke to update Members on recent communications with the external auditor, BDO. This follows a note in the 2024-25 audit about General Reserves held by Town Council being too low. BDO has apologised for its interpretation of the Net Revenue Expenditure definition used within the audit. The former Town Clerk highlighted that the audit process must be fair and transparent and that in his view this was not the case for 2024-25. BDO has agreed to issue a letter to the Town Council explaining the removal of their comments regarding the level of General Reserves.

When deciding upon the level of reserves to be held by the Town Council, Will went on to encourage Members to consider both risk and reward, concluding that “the reward from not over-playing that risk is that you can maximise your ability to deliver on your council plan priorities”.

The Chair thanked the former Town Clerk for pursuing the matter with BDO.

One member of the public left the meeting at 6.34pm and did not return.

58. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Nigel Rawlings and Andy Holdridge (for lateness).

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 10 November 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Members noted that the start time of the previous meeting was 6pm rather than 7pm as stated on the minutes.

61. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

Cllr Andy Holdridge arrived at 6.38pm

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 2 December 2025 be received and adopted and the following recommendations approved:

Minute 24: that the request for a Service Level Agreement by The Harmony Centre be agreed starting 2026/27.

Minute 28: that the Service Level Agreement for the Citizen's Advice Bureau remains at its current level with no reduction in financial support in 2026/27.

62. ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The following recommendations arising from the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee meeting on 7 January 2026 were considered by the Committee:

RESOLVED: that 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 be agreed; (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.

63. BANK RECONCILIATION

Consideration was given to the formal bank reconciliation, ENCL: 4079.

RESOLVED: that the bank reconciliation be approved.

64. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Officer Manager, ENCL: 4080, in the sum of £457,665.78 which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: that the payment of accounts as presented be noted and approved.

65. SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2025/26

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4081.

RESOLVED: that the summary of income and expenditure as presented be noted.

66. FEES AND CHARGES

Consideration was given to a report of the fees and charges for the 2026/27 financial year.

RESOLVED: (1) that the fees and charges for 2026/27 be agreed; and (2) that it be recommended to Full Town Council that the fees and charges for 2026/27 be approved.

67. BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2026/27

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4083.

The Chair on behalf of the Budget Working Group thanked the Town Clerk and Finance & Office Manager for their hard work.

RESOLVED: (1) that the 2026/27 budget as presented by the Finance & Office Manager (RFO) be agreed; and (2) that it be recommended to Full Town Council that the budget of £1,951,600 for 2026/27 be approved.

68. RESERVES

Members considered a report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4084.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that the following be agreed and recommended to Full Town Council for approval: (i) that of the £171,000 CCLA Investment proceeds: £121,000 to be allocated to General Reserves and £50,000 to be allocated to a new Town Plan Projects Earmarked Reserve (please note there are currently no other funds earmarked for this purpose); and (ii) that within the 2026-27 budget, an additional £75,000 be allocated as a contribution to General Reserves.

69. PRECEPT FOR 2026/27

Members considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4085.

RESOLVED: that the proposed Precept of £1,299,700 be agreed and recommended to Full Town Council for approval.

70. RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT: ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4086.

The Town Clerk reported that the Risk Assessment had been reviewed and updated and that the next review would include a risk matrix to evidence clearly the calculation of the risk level in terms of the severity and likelihood of the risk.

Members thanked the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the Corporate Risk Assessment be agreed and recommended to Full Town Council for approval.

71. MEETINGS CALENDAR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4087.

RESOLVED: that the meetings calendar be agreed and recommended to Full Town Council for approval.

72. BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

Consideration was given to the updated policies for (1) Allotments ENCL: 4056, (2) Bridport Cemetery ENCL: 4057 and (3) Information Technology ENCL: 4058.

RESOLVED: that the policies (1) Allotments, (2) Bridport Cemetery; and (3) Information Technology be agreed and recommended to Full Town Council for approval.

73. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items for communication or updates for information.

74. 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.

75. PROPERTY MATTERS

Members noted the report on project updates and thanked the Town Surveyor for meeting with Councillors to look at the WI Hall.

Members discussed possible ways to address the decision-making process in relation to potential asset transfers.

RESOLVED: that the Budget Working Group's remit be extended to include early consideration of possible asset transfers, with a view to recommending to Full Town Council a course of action for this work once the extent of the potential is clearer.

The Town Surveyor and Property Manager left the meeting at 7.52pm and did not return.

76. STAFFING MATTERS

RESOLVED: (1) that the confidential report by the Town Clerk be noted and (2) that the agreed course of action be pursued.

77. COMPLAINT

RESOLVED: (1) that the complaint be noted; and (2) that the Town Clerk contact the police.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 9 March 2026