

Minutes of the meeting of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE of Bridport Town Council held at Mountfield, Bridport on Monday 9 March 2026 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr: Paddy Mooney

Cllrs: Nigel Amor	Nigel Rawlings
Anna Killick	Dave Rickard
Ann Langridge	Sarah Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr Ian Bark, Cllr Jonathan Bourbon, Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Lisa Pinch (Finance & Office Manager), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager) and 1 member of the public.

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting. A minute silence was held in memory of Cllr Dave Bolwell.

The member of the public stated that she was available to answer questions from the Committee about the Writing Box project proposal.

78. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Rob Casey and Andrew Holdridge.

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

80. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 12 January 2026 be confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

81. WRITING BOX UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4110. Discussion took place regarding the proposed project and some questions regarding maintenance were answered by the member of the public, confirming that maintenance will be part of the project costs. It was confirmed that a Town/Parish Council or charity could adopt the telephone boxes. Concern was raised about longer-term usage if the Writing Box project did not extend beyond the initial two year plan.

RESOLVED: that further information be requested from the project co-ordinators.

One member of the public left the meeting at 7.06pm and did not return

82. BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 3 March 2025 be received and adopted and the following resolutions be confirmed and the recommendations be approved:

BV&S Minute 36 West Bay Car Boot Sale Grants Scheme
RESOLVED: i. that all the grants in the table within the Best Value & Scrutiny minutes be approved totaling £5,200.
ii. that the request for a contribution to servicing of the hoist and wheelchairs, and purchase of a hydraulic changing table be agreed.

BV&S Minute 38 Asset Register
RECOMMEND: that the Asset Register be approved and the Finance & Officer Manager be given delegated authority to make any final amendments before it is signed by the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

RECOMMENDED: that the Asset Register be referred to Full Council for final approval.

BV&S Minute 40 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
RESOLVED: that the proposed updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for approval and to Full Council for adoption.

It was noted that Bridport Town Council Scheme of Delegation had not been updated and this would be reviewed by the Budget Working Group.

RECOMMENDED: that the updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be approved and referred to Full Council for adoption.

83. ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The following recommendation arising from the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee meeting on 4 March 2026 was considered by the Committee:

E&SW Minute 34 WB1 – Bus Service

Request that the Town Council continues to project manage the initiative due to new information regarding funding from Dorset Council to enable to service to potentially continue for three additional years.

RECOMMENDED: that the extension of the project and the requirement that the Town Council continues to be the accountable body for the service be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee once confirmation of funding has been approved by Dorset Council.

84. MARKET & BUSINESS LIAISON WORKING GROUP

The notes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 were received and noted. There were no recommendations for consideration, but it was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Working Group is 21st April 2026.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the meeting of the Market & Business Liaison Working Group held on 3 February 2026 be received and noted.

85. BANK RECONCILIATION

Consideration was given to the formal bank reconciliation, ENCL: 4106.

RESOLVED: that the bank reconciliation be approved and signed by the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

86. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4107, in the sum of £122,123.35 which had been authorised for payment since the last meeting.

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

87. SUMMARY OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2025/26

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4108.

Members thanked the Finance & Office Manager for all her hard work.

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

88. EARMARKED RESERVES

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4111.

RECOMMEND: that the committee noted the proposed changes to earmarked reserves and forward these to Full Council on the 24 March 2026.

89. SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE TOWN SURVEYOR AND PROPERTY MANAGER

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk and Property Manager, ENCL: 4109 in respect of the following projects:

Table 1 - Ongoing projects and maintenance

Town Hall	The repairs work to the window in the kitchen is now complete. Decorations to follow on a dry day.
Riverside Gardens	Work has been completed to reduce and thin out all growth. This may look very harsh to people, but I took the decision following extensive amounts of vandalism in this area. We have had 3 statues damaged, seats thrown in the river, seats smashed to pieces, one had only been in 3 days. There has also been signs of drug use with staff having to clear up needles and gas cannisters. The idea is that we will keep everything at a low level and leave the site quite exposed to deter any anti-social behaviour.

<p>Asker Meadows</p>	<p>Bridport Tree Planting Group and Asker Meadows Nature Reserve Group planted 80 saplings in the top corner of the show field in February. This is part of the Brit Valley Funding that is designed to achieve funding for Asker Meadow for the next 20 years.</p> <p>We will also be installing a new fence line in the show field near the A35 this will enable the pathway eventually to link up and form a circular accessible route for all users. This will also establish a parking area for organisers of events in the show field.</p> <p>To work with the Brit Valley Project on the Development Plan. Bins ready to fit, fencing two additional gates planned, new path, planting and new pedestrian and cycle entrance to the meadow as part of the works ready for National Highways to install a controlled crossing from Pasture Way</p>
<p>Salt House</p>	<p>Works to remove and replace the fascia boards are due to begin mid-March.</p>
<p>BTC buildings</p>	<p>We have been advised by Worknest (BTC's healthy and safety service) to carry out an Asbestos Management survey, Legionella risk assessments, both of which have not been done for several years, we have started to investigate this.</p> <p>Fire Risk assessments on all of our buildings, which are carried out annually, are now to be carried by an independent inspector following legislation changes, we are working on this. Further actions have been raised by Worknest which are also required and these will be addressed in order of priority.</p>
<p>St Cecilia's</p>	<p>To work with Edible Bridport to create a growing area on the piece of verge opposite the allotment site. Composters to be in place in January with further works starting in February. The Town Surveyor has met with the group and agreed initially to help install fencing and raised accessible beds, this will be funded from the amenities budget.</p>
<p>Millennium Green</p>	<p>The box hedge along the driveway has been damaged by the Box Moth caterpillar. The hedge is to be removed and to secure the area a railing fence and gate is to be installed by John Bright Fencing. The M/Green Trust have secured funding for this, which BTC will match fund by carrying out the works and providing labour needed. This will help prevent children from running onto the driveway and help secure the area when events are held.</p>
<p>West Bay Discovery Centre</p>	<p>To programme in works to the windows. Mains water has been completed. The staining of the main floor will start Monday 23rd February along with some minor maintenance issues ready for Easter and a new tourist season.</p>
<p>Christmas Lighting</p>	<p>The Christmas Cheer committee is looking to add to the Christmas lighting in the town having again raised money to do this from a very successful Christmas Cheer, it is requested that BTC match fund this up to £3,000 met from existing budgets.</p>

Bridport Football Club and Plottingham Car Park – Enforcement	<p>We were waiting information on the next stage this includes a public consultation and advertisement of the legal order from Dorset Council. We have now received this and the orders are moving forward with advertisement due to be published in the press from 5th March for 21 days, concluding on the 27th March.</p> <p>During this time, the public will have the chance to comment for or against the proposal. The Notice of Proposal and Draft Order will be placed on the Town Council website and site notices (Notice of Proposal) placed within the car parks on or for the public to view.</p>
--	---

Table 2 - Future projects

Bridport Tennis Court Plottingham	<p>Work with Tennis Club to expand the tennis offer and look to add floodlights to the existing courts. Tennis Club to meet with Officers on Monday 23rd February to discuss extending the lease.</p>
Plottingham	<p>To create a multi-use park including, Skatepark, Play Area, floodlights, stage, cycle routes, water fountain, seating and infrastructure. Skatepark plans ready for consultation to move forward to a planning application. Play area plans being prepared for consultation to move forward to a planning application. This scheme is very dependent on areas all around Plottingham that are marked for development, talks with the Housing Group and potential developers, Dorset Council and Housing Associations are ongoing.</p>
West Bay Play Area	<p>Due to the age of the equipment some were in poor condition and in need of repair, these are now complete ready for the summer season.</p>
WI Hall	<p>Improvement, repair and maintenance work to include replacing the front entrance doors, replace door and frame to courtyard and to courtyard wall with accessible access door and ramp, re-wire internal electrics, fire alarm and smoke detector system. A site visit to the site (all councillors invited) took place in January 2026. This scheme is now on hold as we seek external funding, we hope to bring this back for works to start in a suitable window next in January and February 2027. (Please note – this work is separate to the works identified in the report at minute reference 97).</p>
Play Areas	<p>Replace all signage in all play areas, this is ongoing and we are looking to complete by the summer season.</p>
North Mills Play Area	<p>Design being worked up to install paths, seating and planting to further enhance this Play Area creating the possibility of alternative use for the Peter Foote area.</p>
New Zealand Pond	<p>Environment Agency approval. Works timetable to be programmed, this project is seen as low priority and will be held until we have a way forward with the Brit Valley Project.</p>
Cemetery	<p>Chapel roof to be stripped and recovered reusing existing materials to be programmed in for this year after being delayed last year due to financial restraints. The existing gates at the East Road entrance are in disrepair. Previously agreed at F&GP but were delayed, due to financial restraints, these gates will now be programmed in for works after April in the next financial year. Some of the paths are requiring repair and will be scheduled in once the weather improves</p>

Table 3 – For information

Leases	Officers are in the process of updating several leases which are due to expire in 2026/2027 these include Frampton’s Butchers, Agin Care and Bridport Museum.
Borough Gardens	Tenants have previously requested lockable gates at night; this was discussed at a site meeting and Magna voiced objection to this idea as they have flats behind the gardens and it was thought that this would impede the emergency services in the event of a call out. It was suggested that the installation of CCTV would be a deterrent. It was requested all incidents to be reported to the police to build up a log and evidence base if the situation got worse.
St Mary’s	Design for a new pathway to be installed to link the circuit for Park Run design to be drawn up to enable consultation with user groups. This will improve the facility for the Park Run for people to run on a hard surface all around the course and prevent the cutting up of the grassed areas in the winter.
Bridport Football Club Car Park	The boundary wall to Bridport Football Club is in disrepair and is suffering from the concrete panels and posts failing. It is intended to replace the panels by new metal panels and eventually recreate the mural design depicting Bridport’s High St along the riverside as part of the park and stride facility. Working on costings and funding for the second half of the resurfacing the Bridport Football Club car park near the school.
Old Railway Line	Approaches need to be made to all adjoining landowners about access. Discussion had with some adjacent landowners and looking to settle land incursion disputes. To look to establish a community working group.
Tree and Hedge works	The ground staff have carried out extensive hedging and tree works during the winter months, at the Community Orchard, Riverside Gardens, Cemetery, Play Areas, Bradpole etc

RESOLVED: that the updates be noted.

90. CAR PARKS ENFORCEMENT

Councillors considered a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4112.

Members were given an update on the work being undertaken between Dorset Council and Bridport Town Council in relation to implementing a parking enforcement order for Bridport Football Club car park and Plottingham car park.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

91. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none raised.

92. 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.*

93. END OF YEAR DEBTORS

Consideration was given to a confidential report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4113.

RESOLVED: (1) that the actions identified (i and ii) in the confidential report be agreed; and (2) that the option 3 be approved as the next course of action in report item 3.0.

94. CONSIDERATION OF ADVICE FROM MULBERRY LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES

Consideration was given to a confidential report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4114.

RESOLVED: (1) that the actions in report item 2.0 be agreed; that further advice be sought for the items indicated in report item 3.0; and (3) that WI Hall Hire Charges remain at the rate agreed at the January meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (minute ref: F&GP 66) with the VAT being included in the agreed fee cost.

95. INTERNAL AUDITOR 2026/27

Consideration was given to the renewal of the internal audit services provided by Mulberry Local Authority Services ENCL: 4115.

RESOLVED: that the council enter a three-year agreement with Mulberry Local Authority Services.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to consider agenda item 20. Property Matters next and 19. Staffing Matters last.

97. PROPERTY MATTERS

Consideration was given to a confidential report by the Town Clerk, (circulated separately).

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: (1) to complete recommendations a to h as soon as possible and within three months; (2) to complete recommendation j as soon as possible and within three months and (3) to complete the action identified in item 4.2 as soon as possible and within three months.

The Finance & Office Manager and the Property Manager left the meeting at 8.10pm and did not return

96. STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk provided an update on staffing and made recommendations which were supported.

RESOLVED: that recommendations i to iii within the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 8:24pm.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 8 June 2026