

Minutes of the meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held at Mountfield, Bridport on Tuesday 24 March 2026 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT Cllr Anne Rickard – (Chair and Town Mayor)

Cllrs	Nigel Amor	Anna Killick
	Ian Bark	Ann Langridge
	Jonathan Bourbon	Patrick Mooney
	Rob Casey	Nigel Rawlings
	Kelvin Clayton	Bev Thornton
	Andrew Holdridge	Dave Rickard
	Julian Jones	David Worthington

IN ATTENDANCE Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager)

ALSO PRESENT 1 member of the public and no members of the press.

ALSO PRESENT (ONLINE) 1 member of the public.

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

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

T Bovingdon CEO of Harmony was welcomed to the meeting and provided an insightful and poignant presentation which outlined the extensive and varied work carried out by Harmony in supporting the mental health wellbeing of members of the community. She highlighted how awareness and assisting in delivery of practical support and signposting/collaborative working can provide much needed help in times of crisis and need.

T reported that Harmony had grown significantly over 12 years from £25 initial funding to nearly £500,000 turnover. The charity provides three services: social interaction spaces, crisis support, and Access Wellbeing coordination, making it unique as the only voluntary sector organisation in Dorset covering all three elements with no waiting lists or referral requirements. T explained that while they receive funding for frontline services, they face an £83,000 deficit at the start of each financial year and need to fundraise to break even. The charity is grateful for the anticipated receipt of £5,000 grant in 2026-27 from Bridport Town Council.

T presented Harmony's two main focuses for the new financial year: achieving their fundraising target and launching a community mental health awareness program called "Harmony Aware." The program aims to create mental health ambassadors across West Dorset who can provide information about Harmony's services to the community, particularly in local businesses and organisations. It was reported that there had been a 30% increase in attendance in 2025 which was attributed to factors including cost of living pressures, high housing costs, and limited job opportunities, particularly affecting younger people, with waiting lists for youth mental health services being 10 times the capacity of Wembley Arena.

T described Harmony's role as a key facilitator for multidisciplinary routine meetings and explained Harmony's approach to providing immediate support without waiting lists, emphasising practical assistance like securing housing for individuals in crisis. She shared a specific case of a person who was successfully supported through housing and other practical needs, highlighting the importance of creating safe environments for recovery. The discussion concluded with a conversation about the requirement for supported housing, emergency accommodation, and enterprise zones, noting that facilitation of a meeting with a housing association would be beneficial.

7.03pm – a member of the public joined the meeting online

7.05pm – T Bovingdon was thanked for her presentation and left the meeting and did not return

7.05pm – Open Public Forum part 1 ends

There were no further comments from members of the public in Open Public Forum part 2.

83. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bridget Bolwell, Sarah Carney, Sarah Williams and Steve Williams.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this time. It was noted that this does not preclude Councillors from declaring an interest at any other point in the meeting should the requirement arise.

85. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor (Chairman).

86. STANDING ORDER 4(k)(vi)

There were no questions pursuant to standing order 4(k)(vi). (Receipt and consideration of any questions from Councillors, provided such questions would have been notified to the Proper Officer, in writing, at least two clear days before the meeting.)

87. COMMITTEES

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 23 February 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 23 February 2026 be received and adopted.

(b) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 23 March 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 23 March 2026 be received and adopted.

(c) FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 9 March 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Paddy Mooney.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 9 March 2026 be received and adopted, and that the recommendations therein be approved, as set out below: -

(Min No. 38) ASSET REGISTER
RECOMMENDED: that the Asset Register be approved ENCL: 4098.

(Min No. 40) STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS
RECOMMENDED: that revised Standing Orders and Financial Regulations – recommended by the Best Value & Scrutiny Committee and approved by the Finance & General Purposes Committee be adopted, ENCL: 4101 and ENCL: 4100.

(Min No. 88) EARMARKED RESERVES INCLUDING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) EXPENDITURE
RECOMMENDED: i) the proposed earmarked reserves, following the proposed changes being noted by the Finance & General Purposes Committee; and
ii) proposed CIL expenditure. To consider a report by the Finance & Office Manager ENCL: 4117.

(d) ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Social Wellbeing Committee held on 4 March 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor David Rickard.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 9 March 2026 be received and adopted and that the recommendation from minute 37 be approved as set out below: -

(Min No. 37) ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE
RECOMMENDED: registration of three Assets of Community Value as identified by the Committee be referred to Full Council for consideration. To consider a report by the Town Clerk ENCL: 4121.

RESOLVED: that the recommendations from minute 33 be noted but not approved:-

(Min No. 33) TOGETHER ALLIANCE
RECOMMENDED: that the proposal to consider supporting the message of “Hope Over Fear” be considered by Full Council.
To consider a report by the Town Clerk ENCL: 4118.

Councillors felt that the declaration of Bridport as a Rights Respecting Town and the adoption of Bridport Citizen’s Charter fulfilled this requirement as it is a valid and relevant statement in current circumstances.

It was noted that this decision did not preclude Councillors from individually supporting the Together Alliance.

88. PROPOSED STATEMENT OF REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4119.

RESOLVED: that the adoption of the Statement of Reasonable Expectations (SoRE), detailing protocol for communications and working practices between Dorset Council, the Town Council and Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils be supported.

89. BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL PUBLICATION SCHEME

Consideration was given to the updated Publication Scheme, ENCL: 4120.

RESOLVED: that the updated Publication Scheme be adopted.

90. REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Ian Bark had attended Bridport Chamber and explained that the business representatives wanted Bridport Town Council to be aware of the difficulties being faced by the business community. Discussion took place regarding potential ways that help could be provided with suggestions including: a marketing/social media campaign; supporting local employment for local people; and improving high street appearance. Continued communication with Bridport Chamber and the local business community was key, and it was suggested that the remit of the Market and Business Liaison Working Group be reviewed.

91. REPORTS

No reports were received from Dorset Police or Dorset Council members.

It was noted that the applications for 20mph speed restrictions was being progressed by Dorset Council with Wards in Bridport included.

92. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM (FORWARD PLANNING)

It was noted that the invitation had already been sent to the CEO of Coastland college for the June Full Council meeting; and suggested that a representative from the local farming community be invited to speak at the September meeting.

RESOLVED: (i) to welcome Kate Wills CEO of Coastland College (Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College) to the June Full Council meeting. (ii) to invite a representative from the Farming Community Network to speak at the September Full Council meeting.

93. ANNOUNCEMENTS & COMMUNICATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Mayor, ENCL: 4122. No further announcements or communications were made.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm.

The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 23 June 2026