

Minutes of the meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Town Hall on Tuesday 23 June 2026 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT Cllr Jonathan Bourbon – (Chair and Town Mayor)

Cllr	Nigel Amor	Anna Killick
	Ian Bark	Patrick Mooney
	Neil Barnes	Nigel Rawlings
	Rob Casey	Anne Rickard
	Sarah Carney	Dave Rickard
	Kelvin Clayton	Sarah Williams
	Julian Jones	David Worthington

ALSO PRESENT (ONLINE) Cllr Andy Holdridge.

ALSO PRESENT Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Lisa Pinch (Finance and Office Manager), Claire Peters-Way (Property Manager) and Kate Willis CEO (Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College).

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present and the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

14. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Bridget Bolwell, Andy Holdridge (online), Ann Langridge, Bev Thornton and Steve Williams.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor (Chairman), subject to amending minute item 2 apologies to include councillors Rob Casey and David Worthington.

The minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 7 May 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor (Chairman), subject to amending minute item 94 apologies to include Councillor David Worthington.

17. 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.)

18. **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1 June 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1 June 2026 be received.

(b) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 22 June 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 22 June 2026 be received.

(c) FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 June 2026 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Jonathan Bourbon.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 June 2026 be received and adopted, and that the recommendations therein be approved, as set out below: -

(Minute 6) **BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED: that the Annual Accounts for 2025/26 be approved.

(Minute 10) **APPOINTMENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COUNCIL**

RESOLVED: that the list of representatives on outside bodies be amended as in subject to Cllr Nigel Rawlings to replace Cllr David Worthington for Askers Nature Reserve Project; and Cllr David Worthington to replace Cllr Nigel Rawlings as the St Michaels Working Group representative.

(Minute 11) **BUDGET PLANNING 2027/28**

RESOLVED: that (i) membership of the Budget Working Group shall be Cllrs Ian Bark, Andrew Holdridge, Anna Killick, Ann Langridge, Paddy Mooney and Sarah Williams. (ii) note that no further nominations were made.

(Minute 12) **BRIDPORT & DISTRICT CITIZENS ADVICE – REQUEST FOR FURTHER FUNDING REPORT**

RESOLVED: that a sum of £6,000 be transferred into earmarked reserves for financial support for the Citizens Advice Bureau.

RESOLVED: that a one-off grant of £6,000 be granted to Bridport & District Citizens Advice Bureau for 2026/27.

(Minute 16) PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED: that the full payment list be approved. (See Town Council Agenda – 23 June 2026 – item 12 Payment of Accounts/Minute Reference 25).

(Minute 24) COMPLAINTS

RESOLVED: that the membership of the ICO Working Group shall be Cllrs Paddy Mooney, Andrew Holdridge and Ian Bark.

(d) ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 3 June 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Kelvin Clayton.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 3 June 2026 be received and adopted.

***6.48pm Kate Wills, Principal & CEO of Coastland College arrived at the meeting. ***

The Mayor proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Kate to speak.

RESOLVED: that Standing Orders be suspended.

Kate Wills of Coastland College (Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College) was welcomed to the meeting and provided a presentation which outline the merger of the two colleges, their strategic direction and sustainability support. She highlighted how Weymouth college focuses on further education whereby Kingston Maurward is a land based agricultural college. Kate reported that the colleges are exploring the skills needed for the future including offshore wind, green energy, and food security.

Kate outlined that the colleges are exploring regional devolution within the Wessex area which includes colleges at Yeovil, Wiltshire and Bridgwater exploring conversations, key skills (for example AI and coding), travel options and working with employers. She explained the difference between the educational and the commercial side of Kingston Maurward which included a dairy farm, animal park, historic manor house and gardens. She explained that car parking charges have been introduced for visitors to help drive money back into the estate, in order for the money from the Department of Education to be used on the educational side rather than the commercial aspects. The college also liaises with the council to hold events.

Members thanked Kate for her presentation and raised the following questions. Cllr Killick questioned the role of apprenticeships and hub provision. Kate stated that very few employees offer apprenticeships and noted the need for more teachers to teach key skills including construction. Cllr Worthington asked if theatres could be utilised for performing arts students. Kate stated that theatres could be used for pre-16 provision and theatre courses.

Kate reported that distance of travel is a concern and explained that those on level 3 (A level equivalent) are more likely to be more independent and are happy to travel further. Currently around £1m is spent on bus travel to Kingston Maurward and the college has explored different options including their own minibus or coach service. It was noted that there are a lack of students attending the college from Bridport.

Cllr Sarah Williams noted the high proportion of people in the area who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Kate explained that NEET learners fall into three categories: pre-16, post-16, and those aged 16 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. From September, a one-year course will allow NEET learners to explore different subjects and trades, including engineering, welding and wind farm management. She also highlighted the barriers faced by students without maths or English qualifications, noting that these subjects must be studied alongside their course.

It was noted that Kingston Maurward is the only agricultural college in Dorset. She explained that she is working alongside the Lord Lieutenant Michael Dooley linking health & wellbeing and education, also exploring the criminal justice system. Kate invited members to visit either college to find out further information.

Kate Wills left the meeting at 7.20pm and did not return.

RESOLVED: that Standing Orders be re-instated.

19. ELECTRIC PALACE WORKING GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consideration was given to the Terms of Reference for the Electric Palace Working Group, ENCL: 4144, in relation to the Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED: that the Terms of Reference for the Electric Palace Working Group be approved.

20. ACV FORMAL NOTICE OF INTENTION TO BID

Consideration was given to a letter by the Town Clerk to be sent to Dorset Council, ENCL 4145. The Town Clerk reported that the letter will trigger the full six-month moratorium period, allowing the Town Council or another specialist community vehicle the opportunity to secure the necessary capital allocations to acquire the venue and safeguard its long-term future as a cultural hub for the community.

RESOLVED: that the letter to Dorset Council be approved.

21. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Consideration was given to the report received by the Internal Auditor, ENCL: 4151.

The Finance and Office Manager reported that the Internal Audit visit which took place on the 8th June 2026. It was acknowledged by the Internal Auditor and that many of the actions identified in the Interim Audit had been completed. One additional action – a data audit – had been recommended. Members thanked the Finance and Office Manager for all her hard work.

RESOLVED: that the Internal Audit Report be noted.

22. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/2026

Consideration was given to a report of the Responsible Financial Officer ENCL: 4146. The Finance and Office Manager thanked the Town Clerk for their support in producing the annual accounts and Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). It was recommended that the AGAR be approved for submission, including the following:

- The Annual Accounts;
- The Annual Internal Audit Report;
- Section 1 of the AGAR, the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26;
- Section 2 of the AGAR, the Accounting Statements 2025/26; and
- The Conflict of Interest with BDO LLP form.

The procedure for approval of the above, and for submission of returns for the council was moved and seconded, put to the vote and declared to be carried. It was therefore:

RESOLVED: that

- (i) the Council notes the Annual Internal Auditor Report;
- (ii) the Council approves the Annual Governance Statement;
- (iii) the Council approves the Accounting Statements for 2025/2026;
- (iv) the Council declares that there are no conflicts of interest with BDO LLP; and
- (v) the Annual Return be signed and submitted to the External Auditor.

RESOLVED: That the notice for the exercise of public rights for the inspection of the council's accounts be approved. The period will commence on 25th June 2026 and end on 5th August 2026, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

RESOLVED: The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the Notice and the approved and signed Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 will be published on the council's website and noticeboard before the start of the inspection period.

23. ADOPTION OF A VEXATIOUS UNREASONABLE AND UNREASONABLY PERSISTANT COMPLAINTS POLICY

Consideration was given to the adoption of a proposed Vexatious Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints Policy, ENCL: 4147. This policy provides a framework for managing unreasonable, abusive, persistent, or vexatious complaints and complainant behaviour in a lawful, proportionate, fair, and transparent manner.

Members thanked Officers for their work creating the policy.

RESOLVED: that the Vexatious Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints Policy be adopted.

24. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS FOR 2026/27

Consideration was given to the updated membership of Committees and Working Groups, ENCL: 4152. It was agreed that Cllr Neil Barnes replaces Cllr Steve Williams on Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee; and Cllr Neil Barnes is to replace Cllr Ann Langridge on Market and Business Liaison Working Group.

RESOLVED: that the committees, sub committees and working groups be established for 2026/2027, with the terms of reference and delegations, including the delegations to the Town Clerk, as set out in the Appendix to the report.

25. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to the payments list from 1st January 2026 – 31st March 2026, ENCL: 4148. The Finance and Office Manager presented the payment of accounts for transactions, in the sum of £321,605.03 which had been authorised for payment. This having been tabled for members' information was approved and signed by the Chair on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED: that the payments presented be approved and signed by the Chairman.

26. REPORTS

No reports were received from Dorset Police.

Councillor Sarah Williams reported that devolution has been discussed by Dorset Council, but it is not one of their main priorities. Councillor Paddy Mooney reported that since becoming a Dorset Council councillor he has attended several webinars and training events. He noted that Dorset Council has the highest number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Dorset Council's SEND Strategy is working to reduce the number of children needing statutory Education, Health and Care Plans with children remaining in mainstream schools.

Consideration was given to verbal reports provided by Councillors on the issues and activities within their respective wards including the recent closure of the footpath along Holloway due to safety concerns.

RESOLVED: that these reports be noted.

27. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

RESOLVED: that the subject of the open public forum at the next Full Council meeting shall be the Farming Community Network.

28. COMMUNICATIONS

Consideration was given to the Town Mayor's engagements, ENCL: 4149.

The Leader of the Council reported that at the last meeting of the Market and Business Liaison Working Group members received an update on the Cradle to Career project and the new market app created by the Market Superintendent. Councillor Ian Bark

reported that the area has the highest proportion of young people not in education, employment or training across the South West with Bridport having a higher percentage compared to other towns for example Weymouth.

RESOLVED: that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be thanked for their work, and the report be noted.

29. 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.

30. PROPERTY MATTERS/ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Council considered the report by the Town Clerk and Councillors asked questions about the proposals to acquire The Electric Palace.

Following the ensuing discussion, it was

RESOLVED: that recommendations set out in section 11 of the report be agreed, 14 votes for and 1 against.

31. BEACH WHEELCHAIR SCHEME LEASE

Consideration was given to a report of the Property Manager, ENCL: 4150, outlining the draft lease for the Beach Wheelchair store at West Bay between Dorset Council and Bridport Town Council.

RESOLVED: that the draft lease between Dorset Council and Bridport Town Council be agreed.

The meeting closed at 8:42pm.

The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 22 September 2026