Minutes of the meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held at Mountfield on Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT Cllr Jonathan Bourbon – (Chair and Town Mayor)

Cllr Ian Bark, Neil Barnes, Rob Casey, Sarah Carney, Kelvin Clayton, Andrew Holdridge, Julian Jones, Anna Killick, Ann Langridge, Patrick Mooney, Nigel Rawlings, Anne Rickard, Dave Rickard, Sarah Williams, Steve Williams

ALSO PRESENT Sally Freemantle (Town Clerk), Lisa Pinch (Finance and Officer Manager), and James Bowditch on behalf of the Farming Community Network.

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

*** Cllr Steve Williams arrived at 6.33 pm ***.

Open Public Forum part 1:

James Bowditch (on behalf of the Farming Community Network) was invited to speak about his thoughts on future food security and provided a presentation to Councillors. James outlined his experience of the past couple of years, citing his own successful maize crops early in the season but highlighting that up to a third of crops could disappear as a result of the hot weather. His expectation is that if climate change continues, feeding ourselves could become difficult. He would like to see more locally produced food being sold in Bridport. A discussion took place about raising awareness of the climate emergency and linking this to the food security situation within the community.

Councillors highlighted that there are numerous groups campaigning for food security within the Bridport area and that these should be included in any campaign to raise awareness. Questions were asked about reinstating a Farmers' Market, having some sort of community hub where locally sourced food is available in Bridport and a local 'food box' business which does not seem to be available currently.

Other issues highlighted by James included:

- Rising costs due to the global economic climate, a change in the support received by farmers since Brexit and competition from farmers overseas where welfare standards are lower, have all impacted the profitability of farms.

- The financial impact on farmers of having fluctuating profits year-on year i.e. making higher profits one year resulting in larger tax bills in the following year when profits may be much lower.

- James talked of landowners who receive financial support but are not farming. Whilst it is recognised that steps towards environmental improvements are valuable, it is important to also support farmers who produce food.

- The impacts of disease and Inheritance Tax on the future of family farms.

- Getting more young people into farming, talking about the benefits of apprenticeships and working with Coastline College. The Melplash Agricultural Society is keen to educate young people and build the farming community, using facilities such as the classroom at Washingpool Farm which has a paid teacher.

James was thanked for his presentation and the second part of the public forum commenced (7.03 pm).

There were no members of the public present.

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridget Bolwell due to personal reasons, David Worthington due to work commitments and Bev Thornton due to personal reasons.

RESOLVED: the apologies for absence be approved with the reasons given.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor (Chair).

35. 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 were notified to the Proper Officer, in writing, at least two clear days before the meeting).

36. COMMITTEES

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 20 July 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 20 July 2026 be received and adopted.

(b) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7 September 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

It was noted that the visit to the Miles Cross site was postponed.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7 September 2026 be received and adopted.

(c) FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 14 September 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Andy Holdridge.

It was noted that the business rates for Skate and Ride are being reconsidered by Dorset Council.

It was noted that the Torchlight Parade did not go ahead due to the extreme heat weather conditions.

Councillors thanked the Property Manager and Town Surveyor for their excellent report.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14 September 2026 be received and adopted, and that the recommendations therein be approved, as set out below: -

(Minute 28 (ii) <u>BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE MINUTE 11</u>

RESOLVED: that an earmarked reserve be created for the remaining £4,670 for grant funding should any application be made during the remainder of the financial year. (Proposer Cllr Paddy Mooney and seconder: Nigel Rawlings)

(Minute 34) <u>BANKING ARRANGEMENTS</u>

RESOLVED: i) that Councillors [names redacted] remain as signatories, Councillor [names redacted] to be removed as signatory and Councillors [names redacted] are agreed as additional signatories.
(ii) that a timescale of 48 hours for approval of payments be approved.
(iii) that it be agreed to continue with the current method of payment for non-electronic payments.
(iv) to update the Financial Regulations to reflect the new authorisation process (see minute 47 below).

(Minute 38) <u>MOUNTFIELD TOP FLOOR ACCOMMODATION</u>

RESOLVED: (i) the resolution of June 2026 to market the top floor accommodation at Mountfield, Rax Lane as a commercial let be reversed pursuant to Standing Order 7(a);
(ii) the top floor accommodation at Mountfield, Rax Lane be let as a residential accommodation on an Assured Periodic Tenancy, and

that finalisation of the necessary legal, compliance and tenancy arrangements be delegated to the Town Clerk.

(d) ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL WELLBEING

The minutes of the Environment and Social Wellbeing meeting held on 9 September 2026 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Kelvin Clayton.

It was noted that whilst the pedestrian path runs only from Chideock to Symondsbury and not Bridport, the minutes reflected comments made by the Co-Chair of the Loders Transport Group at the meeting.

A question was asked about the junior pitch at Gore Cross and Councillors advised there was no progress to report.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 9 September 2026 be received and adopted.

37. AGAR / COMPLETION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT

Consideration was given to ENCL: 4172 showing that the external auditor's opinion is that Bridport Town Council has completed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) in line with Proper Practices and that there are no matters which give cause for concern or that regulatory requirements have not been met.

Councillors thanked the officers for their work to achieve a clean audit.

RESOLVED: that the update be noted.

38. SLADES GREEN AND GREEN LANE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026-2031

Consideration was given to the final version of the Slades Green and Green Lane Management Plan, ENCL: 4168.

RESOLVED: that the management plan be approved (Proposer: Cllr Andy Holdridge and seconder: Cllr Ian Bark)

39. REPORTS

Leader's Report – Cllr Paddy Mooney was thanked by Councillors for his report. Questions were raised about the proposed boundary changes and Paddy reported that we are in the final stages of consultation but that they did not affect Bridport in a significant way at this stage.

Sarah Williams – as Dorset Councillor Sarah provided an update on the Seals Cove's application for a licence which will take place on 29th September 2026. Objections have been raised including from the police.

RESOLVED: that the updates be noted.

40. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM – INVITED SPEAKER

RESOLVED: that the invited speaker to the open public forum at the January meeting of the Town Council be Youth Voice by Dorset Council (Jayne Browne).

41. COMMUNICATIONS

Consideration was given to the Town Mayor's engagements, ENCL: 4169. The Town Mayor provided additional information on an event at BYCC on Saturday 19th September attended by the High Sheriff.

It was noted that next year the High Sheriff will be Cleeves Palmer and his declaration will take place at the Town Hall in Bridport.

RESOLVED: that the Mayor be thanked for his work, and the engagements noted.

42. 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.

43. FRAMPTONS BUTCHERS LEASE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4170, outlining the draft lease between Framptons of Bridport Limited and Bridport Town Council.

RESOLVED: (i) that the draft lease between Bridport Town Council (Landlord) and Framptons of Bridport Limited (Tenant) be agreed subject to an amendment to the end date from 31/12/2046 to 31/12/2045; (ii) once amended, approval for the lease to be signed in accordance with Standing Orders 15(b)(xii) and (xvii) and 23.

44. BRIDPORT TENNIS CLUB LEASE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4171, outlining the draft lease between Bridport Tennis Club and Bridport Town Council.

RESOLVED: that consideration of the draft lease between Bridport Tennis Club and Bridport Town Council be deferred pending further information.

45. MOUNTFIELD TOP FLOOR ACCOMMODATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4173.

RESOLVED: that the proposed change of use for the top floor accommodation at Mountfield be agreed (Proposer: Cllr Paddy Mooney and seconder: Cllr Sarah Williams) and that the lease be signed in accordance with Standing Orders 15(b)(xii) and (xvii) and 23.

46. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Office Manager, ENCL: 4174.

RESOLVED: that the proposed changes to the banking arrangements be agreed.

47. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Consideration was given to the proposed new Town Council's Financial Regulations, ENCL: 4175.

RESOLVED: that the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations be agreed.

48. ELECTRIC PALACE

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that officers be thanked for the amount and complexity of work undertaken, and the update be noted.

49. STAFFING MATTERS

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 4176.

RESOLVED: that the proposal made be accepted (Proposer: Cllr Kelvin Clayton and seconder: Cllr Sarah Carney)

The meeting closed at 19.56 pm.

The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 24 November 2026