

Minutes of the meeting of **BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Town Hall on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT Cllr Anne Rickard – Town Mayor (in the Chair)

Cllr	Nigel Amor	Anna Killick
	Ian Bark	Ann Langridge
	Bridget Bolwell	Patrick Mooney
	Dave Bolwell	Nigel Rawlings
	Jonathan Bourbon	Dave Rickard
	Sarah Carney	Sarah Williams
	Rob Casey	Steve Williams
	Kelvin Clayton	David Worthington
	Julian Jones	

ALSO PRESENT Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), Paul Fuszard (Finance & Office Manager), Will Austin (Town Clerk), 10 members of the public, and 1 representative of the press.

PUBLIC FORUM

Members of the public engaged in the agreed topic for the Public Forum, social housing.

Tricia Mitchell of the Dorset Area Community Land Trust introduced the work of the Trust since its inception in 2017, and ongoing plans for delivery of 15 affordable homes on the former tennis courts site in Dorchester. She outlined the obstacles faced and was hopeful of a positive outcome soon.

Jim Tigg spoke on behalf of Bridport Area Community Housing (BACH), and explained the status of local affordable housing, including sites that had been delivered, missed housing opportunities, an ongoing review of local housing need, planned social rent housing, a potential role for BACH if sites were made available, and a need for the Town Council to use its limited influence to drive provision of affordable homes.

Jan Parker set out concerns about the large number of people on the local housing register, the poor supply of social rented accommodation, and a general lack of affordability.

Glenn Crawford stressed the urgent need to address the housing crisis, and urged the council to include, in addition to those on the housing register, over 600 young people living in their parents' homes. Development continued to provide larger family homes, despite the Neighbourhood Plan's recognition of the need for small homes. There was a disconnect between local need and local delivery, and cooperation across all involved was needed.

Sylvia Stafford emphasised a need for crisis accommodation and suggested that Sidney Gale House could be used, pending its redevelopment. The former isolation hospital set a precedent when used to house Vietnamese refugees.

Paul Overall introduced the work of a housing need group set up by Bridport Local Area Partnership. The group included Town and Parish Councils, and other stakeholder organisations, and could open doors at Dorset Council. He hoped this work would continue to be supported by the Town Council.

In the open part of the Public Forum, Elaine Leader outlined the operation of the Beach Wheelchair Scheme, which catered for all disabilities. The originally planned operation had not worked as envisaged, and it had become overwhelming and unsustainable for Elaine alone. The Town Council had been supportive as the accountable body for the scheme. £50,000 had been raised and permission had been obtained for a storage unit. Other Town Councils were running similar schemes and Elaine asked that Bridport Town Council amend its five-year plan to accommodate scheme bookings. Volunteers would operate the rest of the scheme to keep costs down.

Paula Reader of Mountjoy School spoke in support of the Beach Wheelchair Scheme. Students had benefited from fulfilling activities provided, and it was the community's duty to maintain the scheme.

Paul Hallett of Mencap spoke in support of the scheme. The organisation, which supported five adults, the Gateway Club, and more, had contributed to it having seen the benefits. Mencap would soon be working with Mountjoy School and others and hoped the Town Council would take on the bookings.

Bill Shelton, a local resident, supported the scheme and the beach matting, and Elaine Leader's request. He was a regular user of the matting, as it helped his health and mobility. The scheme was good for trade, health, and accessibility, and he had seen the joy it brought.

The Mayor thanked all those who had contributed to the Public Forum.

49. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Andy Holdridge and Bev Thornton.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor (Chairman).

52. STANDING ORDER 4(k)(vi)

There were no questions pursuant to standing order 4(k)(vi).

53. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 2 December 2024 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 2 December 2024 be received and adopted.

(b) PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 6 January 2025 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Ian Bark.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 6 January 2025 be received and adopted.

(c) FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 January 2025 were presented by the Committee Chairman, Councillor Paddy Mooney.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 January 2025 be received and adopted, and that the recommendations therein be approved, as set out below: -

(Minute 59) BEST VALUE & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the draft Councillor/Officer Protocol be approved.

(Minute 61) FINANCE AND ESTIMATES 2024/2025 – 3RD REVISION
(ENCL: 3960)

RESOLVED: that that the 3rd revision of the estimates for the year 2024/25 be approved.

(Minute 62) BUDGET AND ESTIMATES 2025/26 (ENCL: 3961)

The Town clerk summarised a report, setting out the draft budget and precept setting out options for 2025/2026. Members thanked officers for the report and discussed the proposed budget and precept recommendation. Members noted the detailed discussions that had previously taken place at Finance & General Purposes Committee. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: (a) that the draft estimates for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix A.

(b) that the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 be approved as set out in Appendix B.

(c) that the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved as a guide for future years as in Appendix C, noting that each year's budget will be subject to separate approval.

(d) that the draft capital programme and proposed use of reserves for 2025/26 and future years, as set out in section 4 of the report and at Appendix D, be approved, noting again that further approval is required.

(e) that in terms of the precept, Option 2 be approved, as set out above and in section 12 of the report, which would increase the precept to £1,191,075 with a consequent annual Band 'D' charge of £204.44.

(Minute 67) RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT: ANNUAL REVIEW

RESOLVED: that the Corporate Risk Assessment be approved as tabled.

(d) ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee held on 8 January 2025 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 8 January 2025 be received and adopted.

54.

MOTION SUBMITTED BY CLLRS
S CARNEY, A KILLICK AND P MOONEY

Cllr Paddy Mooney proposed, and Cllr Anna Killick seconded the following motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 8:

Bridport Town Council believes that every resident of the town has the right to a decent and affordable home, which is also safe, secure and energy efficient. We reflect this in our new 5-Year Plan where we have given the highest priority to finding solutions to the housing crisis that exists in our community.

Based on the latest housing needs data our priority is securing the delivery of 1- and 2-bedroom properties, with a particular focus on providing homes for social rent for young adults (our highest priority) and larger properties for families, as these two groups are bearing the brunt of the affordability and availability crisis locally. We are united in tackling this issue which is vital to delivering successful outcomes for all our residents and contributing to the future economic, cultural and social success of the town.

We are committed to pro-actively working with local authorities, developers, housing associations, as well as community land trusts, charities and other organisations, to reduce the number of people on the housing register and to ensure that as much additional and genuinely affordable housing is provided on appropriate, available land, with social rent housing being given the highest priority on the re-development of brownfield and other development sites in the area.

We are also keen to work with residential and commercial landlords to improve the availability, standards and affordability of rental accommodation in the town. Last but not least, we will promote the need for all our new housing to be supported by improvements in local services and infrastructure.

Cllr Ann Langridge proposed, and Cllr Anna Killick seconded an amendment to the motion such that it read as follows:

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Based on the latest housing needs data our priority is securing the delivery of 1- and 2-bedroom properties, with a particular focus on providing homes for social rent for young adults (our highest priority), but also some larger properties for families, as these two groups are bearing the brunt of the affordability and availability crisis locally. We are united in tackling this issue which is vital to delivering successful outcomes for all our residents and contributing to the future economic, cultural and social success of the town.

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We are also keen to work with residential and commercial landlords to improve the availability, standards and affordability of rental accommodation in the town. Last but not least, we will promote the need for all our new housing to be supported by improvements in local services and infrastructure.

RESOLVED: that the amendment be approved.

Members discussed:

- The emergence of social housing as a priority issue;
- The limitations of Town Council capacity and influence;
- Holding the government to account in the delivery of social housing;
- Councillors' experiences of people in acute housing need;
- The absence of guarantees of forecast affordable housing provision;
- The importance of working with community land trusts and other stakeholders;
- The potentially significant achievement of Dorchester Area Community Land Trust if 15 affordable homes are delivered;
- The challenges of bringing empty homes into productive use; and
- Recent Town Council engagement with Magna Housing.

Following the debate, it was unanimously

RESOLVED: that the motion be agreed as amended.

55. REPORTS

The Town Clerk reported that apologies had been received from Dorset Police.

Reports were received from

- Dorset Council – Cllr Sarah Williams reported that the 2025/26 budget would be considered in Mid-February.
- Bothenhampton & Walditch Ward – Cllr Anne Rickard reported good attendance at ward meetings across two venues. Members had found the Ward Clerk, Jo Hughes, to be very efficient and were pleased with her work.
- West Bay Ward – Cllr Ann Langridge reported that the last ward meeting had attracted 42 members of the public. The Police had been robustly challenged on the issue of antisocial behaviour. Cllr Langridge thanked the Town Clerk for controlling the behaviour of some present.

RESOLVED: that the reports be noted.

56. REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Ann Langridge had indicated she would be stepping down as Town Council representative to Bridport Food Matters. Cllr Langridge advised that she would no longer planned to step down, and it was therefore

RESOLVED: that no action is required on this matter.

57. TOWN COUNCIL FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3969.

Members discussed the plan, including a possible change to incorporate actions relating to the Beach Wheelchair Scheme. Cllr Sarah Williams suggested that this could be carried out under delegation through the Chairmen of Environment & Social Wellbeing and Finance & General Purposes Committees.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council Five-Year Plan be approved.

58. MEETINGS CALENDAR

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, ENCL: 3970.

The Town Clerk summarised a draft calendar of meetings.

RESOLVED: that the meetings calendar be approved as tabled.

59. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Jonathan Bourbon reported that the Twinning Association sought £200 in Council funding for a civic reception for visitors from St Vaast La Hougue in July 2025. Members indicated informally that this would be supported and the Town Clerk confirmed that a payment would be made from delegated budgets as with the previous visit.

RESOLVED: that the report of Cllr Jonathan Bourbon be noted.

60. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Members considered a subject for discussion in the Open Public Forum prior to the next Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED: that the subject for the next Open Public Forum at the next meeting on 25 March 2025 shall be “the impact of the population increase arising from the Foundry Lea development on health and care provision”, and that the Medical Centre, Dorset Council, Dorset County Hospital, Public Health Dorset and the Integrated Care Board be invited.

The Town Clerk advised he would circulate the Section 106 Agreement associated with the Foundry Lea development.

61. ANNOUNCEMENTS & COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Mayor reported her list of engagements, ENCL: 3971.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Town Mayor be noted with thanks.

Cllr Paddy Mooney reported that a leaflet from McCarthy & Stone included 1-bedroom properties for sale from £329,000, or rent from £2,800 per month. This was a postscript to the motion discussed earlier.

At the Mayor’s suggestion, councillors observed a minute’s silence in respect of former Mayor Roger Draper, who had recently passed away.

The Town Clerk reported on a forthcoming meeting with Dorset Council regarding a proposed care development, and on a forthcoming councillor awareness day.

The meeting closed at 8.53pm.

The next meeting of Bridport Town Council will be held on 25 March 2025