



BRADNINCH TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES

**The Guildhall
Bradninch
Exeter, Devon**

**Minutes of the Bradninch Town Council Meeting of
Monday 8th January 2024, 7pm, The Guildhall, Bradninch**

DRAFT MINUTES subject to amendment.

Present: Cllr S Crawford (Chair), Cllr E Ottery (Vice Chair), Cllr P Andrews, Cllr S Birley, Cllr J Blythe, Cllr P Chambers, Cllr R Lawson, Cllr S Glendinning, Cllr L Mottram, Cllr L Taylor, Cllr M Taylor and Cllr I Wild.

In attendance: Mrs A Marshall, Clerk, and 4 member of the public.

Standing Orders suspended.

Public Open Session: A member of the public gave thanks to the Council for covering the printing costs of the new footpath walks booklet, now available to purchase for £1 from the SPAR.

A representative of the Duchy pre-school and playgroup circulated information on the organisations current financial position and asked the Council for support.

Standing Orders resumed.

23/136 PART 2: It was RESOLVED to bring this agenda item forward and to enter into private session. Due to the sensitive nature of the business to be discussed, and in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act and the Local Government Act 1972, the public were asked to leave the meeting.

Duchy pre-school and playgroup funding: The information circulated was considered. It was RESOLVED to revisit this item at the end of the meeting (see 23/149).

Standing Orders suspended and it was RESOLVED to return to the meeting agenda.

Police Matters: No report.

News from Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council: Various reports had been circulated from C/Cllr Berry. A report from D/Cllr Luke Taylor was pending.

Town Mayor: The report had been circulated.

Standing Orders resumed.

23/137 Apologies for absence: C/Councillor Berry due to illness.

23/138 Declarations of Interest relating to items on this agenda: Cllrs L Taylor, M Taylor and Cllr E Ottery - pre-school and playgroup items due to having relations associated with the organisation. Cllr Chambers - Town Trust matters due to being a Town Trust Trustee. Cllr Mottram - allotment matters due to being an allotment holder.

23/139 Confirmation of Minutes: It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the Full Council meeting of 11th December 2023 as a correct record. The Planning Committee meeting minutes of 4th January 2024 would be considered in February.

23/140 Finance:

a) **Bank balance** – noted as being £47,101.67 at December 31st 2023.

b) **Surplus funds** – estimated at December end to be £1,613 as at year end (31/03/2024).

c) **Annual Allotment Insurance** – following a review of cover by Cllr Wild, it was RESOLVED to accept his recommendation to renew the annual policy at a cost of £103.87.

d) **Vodafone (Guildhall wi-fi)** – on entering the second and final year of the Vodafone contract a monthly fee had now become payable. It was RESOLVED that a monthly direct debit should be set up and that a decision on requesting contributions from the Town Trust would be deferred until later in the meeting (see 23/148).

e) **DCRF grant funding (flood defence for Hen Street)** – receipt of the £1,392 grant funding was noted. It was RESOLVED to purchase 40 FloodSax for Hen Street residents and to move the remaining funds to earmarked reserves until further FloodSax were needed. It was agreed that any alternative purchases would need to be agreed by DCRF. Items to be delivered to Cllr Crawford.

f) **Payments and receipts** – Standing Orders suspended and the grounds maintenance contractor was invited to speak. He explained that the Hen Street stream clearance had taken more time and labour than expected and asked for the additional £300 invoiced to be paid. Standing Orders resumed and it was RESOLVED to

make the payments listed for January, including the additional £300 requested from Garden Services, and the receipts for December were noted.

23/141 Christmas Lights 2024: Cllr Taylor advised of the working groups 2024 Christmas Lights plan which included expanding the tree lighting along Hele Road and onto the Townlands island. The Chairman thanked all the volunteers and the working group for the help and time given towards this year's Christmas Lights project.

23/142 D-Day anniversary (June 2024), a Celebration and commemoration of D-Day: Permission to have a beacon in the same field as before had been granted. The Council would, however, need to source and pay for the linseed bales for the beacon this year. Concerns about the event being on a Thursday, and close to other local events, were raised and it was RESOLVED that the working group should put recommendations to full Council at the February meeting.

23/143 Footpaths: Cllr Andrews reported that the refurbished footpath leading from the Cemetery to Hele Road had, so far, stood up well to the recent wet weather and flooding. He agreed to investigate the ownership of the footpath from Hele Road to Dukes Orchard following reports that it was in need of weeding.

23/144 Bradninch Football Club - pitch fungi: Cllr Mottram aired concerns about losing the rare fungi found on the training pitch should the club go ahead with the planned pitch refurbishments. The fungi was present on this site as the land had not been ploughed or improved by use of pesticides or fertilisers as yet. Council was asked to support the protecting of the fungi although it was confirmed that there was currently no legal status in place for its protection. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Mottram, on behalf of the Council, should discuss the matter with the football club management and put a case forward for protecting the fungi in some way.

23/145 Communications:

- a) **Keeping of hens on the allotment site** – an email had been received from a resident who was annoyed at the Allotment Committee's recent decision to ban the replacement of hens at the allotment site as this would result in no hens on site in the longer term. Following discussion, it was RESOLVED that the Allotment Committee should deal with this matter and invite the resident to the next Committee meeting.
- b) **Speed Watch** – an email from a resident had advised that due to lack of volunteers to run this project it was in danger of closing down. Council felt it important to keep the project going so it was RESOLVED to ask the resident to put together an advert asking for interested persons to make contact. The Clerk would then place the advert on social media, the Council's website and noticeboard and in the local magazines.
- c) **Gate in Hele Road swinging into the main road** – Cllr Crawford reported that a gate in Hele Road was swinging into the road on a regular basis causing a safety concerns. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Lawson would advise the property owner of the situation.
- d) **Grounds maintenance** – the contractor had raised several items for consideration by email –
 - i **Fore Street pollarding** – the contractor had asked why he had not been invited to quote for the tree work in Fore Street. The Chairman reported that this would appear to be an oversight by the Council. It was RESOLVED that an invitation to quote would follow next time.
 - ii **Additional grass cutting** – the contractor had advised that, to keep the town looking neat and tidy and to avoid damaging his mowing equipment when the grass got too long, an additional cut of the Churchyard, Cemetery and Recreation Ground was required at year end, every year, and he had asked for this to be agreed and added to the contract. The Chairman reported that the Council relies on the contract details agreed between the contractor and the Council. Any additional work involved additional funding which the Council would not have budgeted for. Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to add an additional cut at year end, as stated, to the contract for the rest of its term. Funding would be taken from general reserves if necessary.
 - iii **Allotment access paths** – the contractor had suggested that two additional cuts per year were required on the access paths to avoid them becoming unusable. Further to discussion, it was RESOLVED to add the requested two further cuts per year to the existing contract for the rest of its term. Due to this, the Allotment Committee would consider the removal of the rule in the Allotment

Tenancy Agreement relating to tenants needing to keep the access paths cut. Also, consideration would need to be given to raising the allotment rental fees to pay for this additional work.

- iv) **Allotment hedge cutting** – the contractor had advised that he was unable to reduce the height of the hedge behind the allotment container to the height required by the contract due to the additional work and costs being more than what was allowed on the current contract. It was RESOLVED that the Allotment Committee should discuss the hedge height reduction at its next Committee meeting.
- v) **Wooden foot plinths around allotment plots** – the contractor had suggested that wooden plinths be installed to help with strimming. It was RESOLVED to pass this matter to the allotment Committee.
- e) **Hele Road/Westfield bus stop** – an email from a resident reported that an accident had taken place at the bus stop and, as a solution to the current safety issues, he requested that the bus stop could be moved. Following consideration, it was RESOLVED to ask DCC Highways to consider moving the designated bus stop road markings further along the road, nearer to the allotment site entrance, for safety reasons.
- f) **Cricket Club Lease amendment** – the club had requested a copy of the current lease and had suggested that, whilst amending the lease to include the recent merger, the Council may wish to consider an extension to the lease term. It was RESOLVED to provide a copy of the current lease but not to grant any permission for an extension to the current lease term. The reason for this was that the planned Assignment of the lease would be cheaper for both parties than the creating of a new lease which would be required if the term was extended.
- g) **Catch 77** – thanks had been received with regards to the recent donation from the Council.

23/146 DCC Highways: The Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (VAS) had been ordered.

23/147 Committees: Cllr Wild reported that a Churchyard wilding working group meeting would take place shortly.

23/148 Guildhall Chamber Room Hire Agreement: The Town Trust had supplied a draft hire agreement, as requested, for Council consideration. Cllr Lawson reported that a new stair lift was to be installed shortly to help with the required accessibility to Council meetings. It was confirmed that the Council currently pays an annual lump sum to the Town Trust for use of the Chamber for meetings and storage, the lump sum being a more efficient way of paying for the use of the room. Following consideration, it was RESOLVED to reply to the Town Trust asking for the agreement to be amended. The amendments would include having the annual sum payable by the Council being agreed by the Town Trust and notified to the Council each November, for payment in the following year, as this would assist with budgeting. The stair lift should be kept in working order at all times and, lastly, the agreement should carry a one-year term. It was agreed that an agreement and lump sum payment over paying for individual uses of the room was the preferred option. Cllr Chambers did not vote on this matter.

It was RESOLVED to request contributions of 50% from the Town Trust with regards to the monthly Vodafone costs for the Guildhall wi-fi (see item 23/140 d). It was further RESOLVED to advertise the pending vacancy for a Town Council Representative on the Town Trust, in accordance with the Council's policy, and to advise the Town Trust accordingly.

23/149 PART 2: Following item 23/136 above, it was RESOLVED to enter into private session due to the sensitive nature of the business to be discussed. In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, and the Local Government Act 1972, the public were asked to leave the meeting.

Duchy pre-school and playgroup funding: Following full consideration of the information provided earlier in the meeting, it was RESOLVED to donate a £2,000 lump sum to the Duchy pre-school and playgroup from the Council's general reserve funds. Any further funding requests of this nature would need further consideration. Cllrs L Taylor, M Taylor and E Ottery did not vote on this matter.

23/150 Events, comments, updates (no decision making during this item):

a) **Action/Project Register** – circulated.

b) **Blocked drains and mud on local roads** - Cllr L Taylor had contacted the local DCC Highways representative regarding these matters, with focus on Back Lane in particular.

- c) **Blocked pavement along Fore Street** - Cllr Andrews reported that building materials continued to block part of the Fore Street pavement which was causing a safety issue. Residents are encouraged to use the DCC 'Report a Problem' on-line link to get such issues actioned at www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/
- d) **Dropped kerbs** – Cllr Andrews reported that due to concerns over local dropped kerbs, this process was being investigated by the Planning Committee.
- e) **Rooted Rose at the Cemetery** – Cllr M Taylor reported that a yellow rose had taken root under a tree at the Cemetery and wondered if it should be removed. It was generally agreed that this natural process was acceptable.
- f) **Christmas dinners** - Cllr Birley reported that he and his wife would be aiming to provide free Christmas dinners in 2024 to those on their own on Christmas Day. More information on the 'community Christmas lunch' would follow.
- g) **Local death** – Council was saddened to hear that a local Footpath Warden had lost a son recently. The Chairman would offer condolences and make contact on behalf of the Council.
- h) **Sustainable Bradninch** - Cllr Mottram reported on Sustainable Bradninch and the busy month ahead. A talk on 'ghost ponds' would take place at the Guildhall next week, a community 'tree moving' event would take place shortly involving moving trees from the allotment site to Killerton, a Repair Shop would take place on 27th January.
- i) **Duchy PTFA coffee morning** – this event would be taking place at the Guildhall this weekend, all are welcome.
- j) **Caretaker** – the caretaker would be off work for a couple of weeks at the end of the month and Cllr Birley would be overseeing the required basic duties during this time.

23/151 Next Town Council meeting and venue: Monday February 12th 2024.

The meeting closed at 21.33, a meeting of the Bradninch Youth Centre Trust commenced immediately afterwards.

PAYMENTS JANUARY 2024	£	VAT	RECEIPTS DECEMBER 2023	£
Staff salaries (net)	1686.30	n/a VAT	Burial income	426.80
Clerk pension (employer/employee cont.)	429.31	n/a VAT	Allotment income	220.00
HMRC Tax/Ni	331.67	n/a VAT	Bank interest	54.01
Clerks expenses (working from home, ink)	65.99	Incl VAT	Christmas Lights bucket collection	156.49
Allotment deposit refund 18A	30.00	n/a VAT	DCRF Grant Funding (Hen St flood defences)	1392.00
Christmas Lights expenses - J Clutterbuck	20.00	n/a VAT	To be banked – Mayors Coffee	235.00
L Taylor (paid Dec).	37.35	n/a VAT	Morning funds	
Annual Allotment Insurance renewal	103.87	n/a VAT		
Vodafone monthly direct debit (Guildhall wi-fi)	29.74	Incl VAT		
Payment claimed in December 2023	2.88	Incl VAT		
Mayor's Coffee Morning Guildhall room hire	33.00	n/a VAT		
SCRIBE – annual fee	345.60	Incl VAT		
12 th Night donation – Mayors Fund	150.00	n/a VAT		
Flood defences (Hen Street), up to	1392.00	plus VAT		
Duchy pre-school donation (Mayor's Fund)	235.00	n/a VAT		
S Glendinning – quarterly payroll	82.50	n/a VAT		