



BRADNINCH TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES

The Guildhall
Bradninch
Exeter, Devon

Minutes of the Bradninch Town Council Meeting
Monday 12th February 2024, 7pm, The Guildhall, Bradninch

DRAFT minutes subject to amendment.

Present: Cllrs S Crawford (Chair), E Ottery (Vice Chair), P Andrews, J Blythe, S Glendinning, R Lawson, L Mottram and L Taylor. **In attendance:** Mrs A Marshall, Clerk, and 10 members of the public.

Public Open Session (standing orders suspended):

a) Town Trust – the new Town Trust Chairman, Anthony Richards, reported that the Trust's accounts are now up to date and have been registered with the Charity Commission. A break-even financial situation for the coming year is being predicted and the employment of a Clerk will depend on the financial position going forward. The stairlift will be replaced as soon as possible. The building plans have been revised to include moving the position of the lift. New benches have been installed at the front of the Guildhall. Discussions are ongoing about the future use of the billiard room. The Town Trust is going through a lot of change at the moment and a new website is being created with the aim of engaging better with the community. The Insurers of the Guildhall are not happy with the large number of key holders at present so this matter is being considered. There were no questions from the room.

b) On-street electric car charging points – a resident remind the Council of its decision in 2021 not to use any existing car parking spaces for electric charging points and asked for this to be taken into account when discussing the agenda item later in the meeting.

c) Weed spraying – the Chairman explained that the Council is to review the current weed spraying process as, in places, it is not being as effective as it could be. He asked for comments from the room:

i) A representative of the local Bee Group reported that bees are under pressure and that pesticides are a factor, a point with scientific backing. She requested that a natural form of weed suppression be used and that harsh spray should only be used if absolutely necessary, and in the months when bees are less active.

ii) The Grounds Maintenance Contractor confirmed that non-glyphosate spray is currently being used and that town spraying takes place twice a year, in April/May and September/October. Unfortunately, this spray only kills the weeds, and is not strong enough to kill grasses, resulting in clumps of grass being left in situ. This spray is 4 times the price of glyphosate products, adding to weed control costs. Other methods, such as use of a burner and hand pulling, had been tried but for several reasons had not been successful. An alternative non-glyphosate spray would be tried this year along West End Road in the hope that it would kill the grass. He requested that a glyphosate spray be sanctioned for use in areas with grass to keep the grass under control.

iii) It was noted that a PAN (Pesticide Action Network) report <http://www.pan-uk.org>, sourced by Cllr Mottram and circulated to Council, provided useful information on weed spraying in general. It had suggested that glyphosphates will probably be banned in 2025.

iv) A resident suggested that a community working group would be willing to clear grass and weed debris should the Council organise it. Debris would need to be got rid of. It was agreed that the integrity of the town's infrastructure would need to be considered, in Fore Street for example, when a weed spraying policy is set up which the Council would be considering.

v) A resident reported that, as a gardener, she chooses to remove weeds by hand as part of the job and does not use chemicals. She suggested that the Council could use this method of weed control.

vi) A resident suggested that minimal use of glyphosate in hot-spot problem areas around the town, like West End Road, could be authorised over the next year, at times to suit the bees, in order to get the grass and stubborn weeds under control. Non glyphosate spray could then be used in all areas going forward. There was support to spend more funds on non-glyphosate products due to the benefits. A Council policy capturing this, and the organising of a working party, would be positive moves going forward. Grazon 90 was confirmed as the non-glyphosate spray currently being used.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and advised that the matter would be further considered by the Council later in the meeting. All members of the public left the meeting and standing orders were resumed.

Police Matters: No report.

News from Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council: Newsletters from C/Cllr J Berry and a report from D/Cllr L Taylor had been circulated.

Town Mayor: The monthly report had been circulated. A Mayor's Quiz would take place on 20th April. The Annual Parish Meeting would take place on Monday 15th April, 7.30pm, at the Guildhall.

23/152 Apologies for absence: Received and accepted from Cllrs S Birley and P Chambers – family commitments. Cllr M Taylor – holiday. Cllr Wild – unwell.

23/153 Declarations of Interest relating to items on this agenda: Cllrs Glendinning and Mottram declared an interest in Town Fair matters due to being on the Town Fair Committee.

23/154 Confirmation of Minutes: It was RESOLVED to agree the Full Council meeting minutes of 8th January 2024, and the Planning Committee meeting minutes of 4th January 2024, as correct records.

23/155 Finance:

a) Bank balance – noted as being £38,216.76 as at January 31st 2024.

b) 'Free funds' – following the transfer of £2,000 from 'general reserves' to cover the recent donation to the Duchy preschool and playgroup, and the need to replace this at some point, the 'free funds' position was noted as being zero at the current time (or £1,219, if the 'general reserves' were to remain at £11,500).

c) Payments and Receipts – it was RESOLVED to make the listed payments for February 2024 and the receipts for January 2024 were noted (see below).

23/156 Town Weed Spraying: Following consideration of the public open session comments, the Chairman asked all Councillors to read the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) report prior to further consideration on weed control and the adoption of a weed control policy. Cllr L Taylor agreed to spraying times to suit the bees and suggested that the proposed new Town Warden role could include weed control in between contracted spraying. The current contract had two years left to run. It was RESOLVED not to make a decision on the way forward at this time but to consider the options and to put the matter on a future agenda. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Mottram would contact the residents who had offered to help keep the town tidy as part of a working group. Cllr Mottram would also lead a Council working group, consisting of Cllrs Mottram, Crawford and Andrews, with regards to creating a draft weed spraying policy for Council consideration. PAN would be contacted by the working group for general advice.

23/157 D-Day anniversary event (June 2024): A working group meeting would take place shortly in order to put recommendations together for Council consideration at the March meeting.

23/158 Town Fair: A request had been received for funding and support for the 2024 Town Fair. It was RESOLVED to offer the budgeted £500 to pay for tangible items and that the Clerk, with Chairman support, would have delegated authority to oversee the payments in between meetings if required. The Council would support with the running of stalls, details to be confirmed.

23/159 Footpaths: Nothing to report.

23/160 Communications:

a) Recreation ground light – a further email from a resident had been received in connection with a light at the recreation ground remaining on through the night, a reply was not required. Noted.

b) MDDC State of the District meeting 20th March 2024 – it was RESOLVED that Cllr Crawford attend.

c) Airband road closures – several road closure notices had been received but no specific dates had been given. The closures were in connection with the laying of cables. Noted.

d) Removal of a tree at Culver Close – an enquiry from a resident had been received regarding the removal of a dead tree. Due to the tree belonging to the resident, it not being in a Conservation Area or being protected by a Tree Protection Order, the Tree Warden could see no objection to the removal.

e) Royal Garden Party nomination 21st May 2024. It was RESOLVED to nominate Cllr M Taylor.

f) On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme – a resident had requested that this electric car charging scheme be considered by the Council. It was RESOLVED, in accordance with the standing resolution, to look into charging points only once land had been acquired for additional car parking in order that no existing parking spaces were lost.

23/161 DCC Highways:

a) Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (VAS) project. Dates for the installation of the posts along Hele Road and West End Road were pending along with the delivery of the speed sign and invoice. Council was delighted to hear that C/Cllr J Berry had pledged £500 of Locality Funding towards this project.

b) Hele Road/Westfield Bus Stop options. A response had been received from DCC Highways following a request from the Council to move the bus stop slightly to help those getting on and off busses and for safety reasons. Following consideration of the two options provided, it was RESOLVED that whilst one of the options could be suitable the costs to the Council would be too high to enable the project to be taken forward.

c) 20mph speed limit scheme. Cllr Andrews confirmed that he had registered the Council's interest in this scheme last year and so there was nothing further that could be done to move the process forward at this time.

23/162 Committees:

a) RoSPA play equipment annual inspection and weekly checklist – it was RESOLVED to use RoSPA for the annual independent inspection of play equipment at the recreation ground at £78.00. It was further RESOLVED to purchase a copy of the weekly equipment checklist at £40.00.

b) Churchyard wilding project – Cllr Mottram reported that a working group meeting had recently taken place in order to move the project forward. Two areas for wilding had been identified within the Churchyard grounds with the agreement of the Grounds Maintenance Contractor. Sustainable Bradninch had pledged to pay for and plant bulbs. The meeting minutes would be available from the Clerk in due course.

c) New roundabout – it was reported that the old roundabout was continuing to work well and so the new roundabout purchase would remain on hold. All funding towards the new roundabout had been ring-fenced.

23/163 Town Trust:

a) Amended Chamber Hire Agreement. Amendments to the draft Agreement suggested by the Council had been accommodated. It was noted that the stair lift was still not working and, as it was a requirement to have access to Council meetings for all members of the public, it was RESOLVED to ask for an update on this and to request a ground floor meeting space if necessary. An enquiry as to what would happen if the Agreement was breached, if the stair lift stopped working or if the building could not be used for example, would also be made. The Agreement would not be signed by the Council until the matters raised had been resolved.

b) Town Council Representative on the Town Trust – no applications had been received with regards to the pending vacancy, it was RESOLVED to continue with the advertising.

23/164 Planning:

a) 23/01778/TPO granted - lift the crown of 1 Lime Tree at Stockwell Cottage, Silverton. Noted.

b) 23/01714/HOUSE granted – raising of roof for living accommodation 24 Millway, Bradninch. Noted.

c) 24/00010/HOUSE application - conversion of garage to living accommodation 2 Jubilee Road Bradninch. It was RESOLVED not to object to this application.

d) Information - pull-in at Bowhill Cottages. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Andrews would report this to the local DCC Highways Officer as a possible breach and that the matter would be passed to the Planning Committee.

e) Information – dropped kerbs. It was RESOLVED to pass the information received to the Planning Committee.

23/165 Vexatious Complaints Policy: It was RESOLVED to adopt the draft policy.

23/166 West End Hall:

a) Youth Club management – it was noted that a new Youth Club manager had been employed. It was RESOLVED to pass on the Council's best wishes for the future to the Club.

- b) Car park spaces annual renewal** - it was noted that the renewals had been completed and that one space had changed hands. There were now four residents on the waiting list.
- c) Sanitary bins** - Council had been asked to consider installing sanitary bins in the hall toilets. It was RESOLVED not to move forward with this request at this time.
- d) Fire escape door** – it was reported that the door had become difficult to open and close. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Crawford would inspect the door within the week and ask the Clerk to arrange a repair if felt relevant.

23/167 Events, comments, updates (no decision making during this item):

- a) Action/Project Register** – circulated.
- b) Caretaker** – Cliff had returned to work today following a successful medical procedure. Cllr Birley would be thanked on behalf of the Council for covering duties over the past fortnight.
- c) Fore Street trees** – the agreed pollarding had taken place and positive feedback had been received from residents.
- d) FloodSax** - the agreed equipment had been delivered to Hen Street residents by the Chairman who had received positive feedback.
- e) Network Rail** - Cllr L Taylor had heard from a resident that the Hele flood alleviation works were likely to commence this year, although no official notification from Network Rail had been received. March agenda item.
- f) Town 'welcome sign'** - Cllr L Taylor suggested that 'Welcome to Bradninch' could be sign written on the blank side of the new sign. The Chairman asked for this to be a March agenda item.
- g) Sustainable Bradninch** - Cllr Mottram invited everyone to attend a quiz on 23rd February at the Guildhall, and also a tree planting event on 3rd March.
- h) Bradninch Common layby** – Cllr Mottram asked whether a bin could be considered for the layby following reports of rubbish and cans being left there. It was agreed that this was a MDDC matter.
- i) PTFA** – Cllr Ottery invited everyone to a quiz on 24th February at the school.
- j) Councillors with family commitments** – it was understood by all present that due to family commitments it was not always possible for Councillors to attend Council/Committee meetings. Cllr L Taylor felt that the town was lucky to have younger Councillors on board and that, as a result, family commitments were inevitable and accepted. It was agreed that as Councils are in place to represent communities, which Bradninch Council does well, the Council would continue to support Councillors needing to put family before attending meetings.
- k) Mayor's quiz** – Cllr Crawford invited everyone to attend the Mayor's quiz on April 20th in favour of the Duchy pre-school and playgroup.

23/168 Next Town Council meeting and venue: Monday March 11th 2024, The Guildhall, 7pm. The Annual Parish Council meeting was expected to take place on Monday April 15th, 7.30pm, at The Guildhall.
The Meeting closed at 21.30

PAYMENTS FEBRUARY 2024	£	VAT	RECEIPTS JANUARY 2024	£
Staff salaries (net)	1686.70	n/a	Burial income	0
Clerk pension (employer/employee cont.)	429.31	n/a	Allotment income	145.00
HMRC Tax/Ni	331.27	n/a	Bank interest	38.68
Clerks expenses (working from home £56.00, ink £9.99, postage £11.50, printer paper £20.99, FloodSax £299.27, flowers £55)	452.75	Incl VAT	Mayors Coffee Morning (paid to Duchy pre-school and playgroup)	235.00
Source for Business (water) Cemetery	21.75	n/a	Town Trust Vodafone contribution	12.39
Howe's Tree Surgery and Landscapes	765.00	n/a		
Duchy pre-school and playgroup (paid January)	2000.00	n/a		
Vodafone monthly direct debit	29.74	Incl VAT		
Sharper Print (walk booklets)	388.00	n/a		