

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held in the Community Hall on
Tuesday September 27th 2022 at 7.30pm**

Present: Councillors: Anderton, G Baker, Coulter, Crawford, Cullen, Fradley, Hood,
Jones, Robinson, Taylor, and Wilson.

In the chair: Councillor Jones

In Attendance: County Councillor Tom Power
Approximately 40 members of the public

The public session of the meeting opened at 7:30pm, the points for discussion can be found as an appendix to these minutes.

The public session closed at 7:54pm

The main meeting opened at 7:54pm

Cllr Jones announced a slight alteration in the agenda item order. After agenda items up to item 4 Action Points, then item 8 would be heard, followed by item 6, item 12 then item 11. The agenda items would then follow in the order as published.

22/95: Apologies for absence.

Councillors Abi Baker, James Buckland together with District & County Councillor Lucy Trimmell Deputy Town Clerk had sent apologies for being unable to attend.

22/96: Declarations of Interests

None.

22/97: Minutes of previous meeting

It was RESOLVED 10-0-0 [For-against-abstain] that the minutes of the Full Council meeting of 30th August 2022 be adopted as a true and accurate record.

22/98: Action points

The action points from the previous meeting were noted.

22/99: Market Town Investment Group (MTIG)

- a To receive a report on the Evaluation Meeting of 22nd September.
Cllr Jones provided a short overview of the function MTIG, and the funding opportunities that the Bruton has benefitted from. The final meeting of MTIG is on 24th November 2022
- b To consider two funding options for Station Road car park. Consideration is for the actual program of works, not procurement of the contractor. The contractor procurement has been completed by MTIG
 - i. Scope of works for quote 1, which is a basic maintenance scheme. These works will be completely funded by MTIG.
 - ii. Scope of works for quote 2, which is an enhanced maintenance scheme. These works will require a funding commitment from the Town Council of £5000 to facilitate.

It was proposed that quote 2 was accepted, which requires a funding commitment of £5000. It was further proposed that a discretionary further spend of up to £5000 is authorised and delegated to the Proper Officer in discussion with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman.

It was RESOLVED (10-0-0) to accept quote 2 with an input of funds of £5000 from Bruton Town Council, with an additional discretionary spend of up to £5000 delegated to the Proper Officer in discussion with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. *Action 220927/1 acceptance of quote 2, notify MTIG.*

Cllr Hood made a short personal statement about the decisions made in the July Town Council meeting .

- A detailed survey of use of the car park had taken place before the lease was undertaken. The car park is used mainly for long stay during the week and is less used at the weekend.
- The car park is the size that it is. The proposal is not to expand the provision but a proposal to improve the provision.
- The residents, via the Town Council, spend £10000 on the lease for the car park annually. The lease is very short, which raised the question of how much public funding should be spent on a privately owned space.
- If an alternative lower priced/economical option had been provided at the time, that option would have been considered.
- The discussion was based on information shared verbally, which is quite difficult to consider, with no lower price option available.
- A point of order is that that the lease covers a fixed number of parking bays which is 23.
- The scheme currently on the table the scheme available which will improve the current status of the car park.
- The length of the lease is large consideration when making the decision.

- c To receive an update on benches and fingerposts.
The return has been submitted to MTIG to obtain a refund of the invoices list, for those items funded by the MTIG program, well done to Jo Swift (Responsible Financial Officer).

It was proposed, and RESOLVED, to thank Marie Ainsworth and Nicky Doble of MTIG for their support. (10-0-0). *Action 220927/2 Town Clerk to arrange.*

22/100: District and County Councillor Reports.

Tom Powers, County Councillor, gave a short verbal report.

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) following the Secretary of State instruction, will take place on 1 April 2023. The new CEO is in place this week.
- Nominations are invited for the Community Resilience award.

22/101: Christmas evening road closure.

Cllr Jones has contacted both County and District Councils regarding a road closure application for the road closure required for the Christmas event. The road closure is a District Council matter, for which the fee should be £210.

The Deputy Clerk is to submit the application, and a meeting of the Events Committee is to be called, to progress the event. *Action 2209273 Deputy Clerk to progress.*

22/102: Commercial waste bins of public land

Cllr Hood provided an overview of reports received regarding bins placed at various locations on public land in Bruton that are not aesthetically pleasing.

- Higher Back Way where bins are placed on both sides are unsightly and are in the way, and a possible health risk.
- Business owners are exploring solutions which include crushing glass to reduce the amount of glass recycling to be collected and putting the bins out just before the collection is due.
- It is difficult to find a supplier to attend and empty behind the shops, as the challenging access and low hanging trees present obstacles.
- Removal of the bins after collections are made will be late if the collection itself is late.
- Efforts being made are recognised and valued, thank you.

22/103: Minutes and Recommendations from Committees and from those Working Groups that report to the Full Council

a Strategic Planning Future Bruton Committee

Cllr Robinson gave a short verbal report on the recent meetings held. After the initial meeting, which was a 'meet and greet', the first step was to form a Steering Group for the refreshing of the Town Plan. Volunteers will be required to support the hard work that would be encountered over the next six months. People are encouraged to get involved with workstreams.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend and take part in events, and not the administration or analytical tasks. A printed questionnaire will be produced which will need delivering, and other various tasks.

b Brubowl Working Group

- i.** To commission Maverick Industries to undertake a topographical survey of the proposal site at a cost of £1.5k. The survey has already been conducted.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to fund the survey as suggested (9-1-0).

- ii.** To obtain quotes for an ecological survey as advised as part of the pre-application advice from Planning Department.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to allocate £2000 for an ecological survey (9-1-0).

- iii.** To authorise the Deputy Clerk to spend up to £200 on a user consultation event, if required.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to authorise the Deputy Clerk to spend up to £200 on a user consultation event if required (10-0-0).

c Retrofit Bruton and Cary Working Group

The group have not met since the last Town Council meeting. An online retrofit calculator is now live and contains a list of local businesses that provide the retrofit service. The link for the calculator is to be added to the Town Council website.

Action 220927/4 Town Clerk to arrange.

A question was raised about community solar farms. The working group that overviews this type of issue met the previous evening, but a report has not been received. A Town Committee meeting is due to be held in the next 10 days, which the public are welcome to attend.

22/104: Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Cllr Jones thanked Reverend Evans for working well with the Town Council during the period of mourning, especially regarding the ringing of the bells and flags. The book of condolence was located in the Community Office, and the electronic condolence book was promoted as an alternative.

- a To consider a permanent location for the Bruton Book of Condolence. Consideration was given to placing the condolence book in the library, or the museum, now that the period of mourning is over.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to invite both the library and the museum to store the condolence book.

Action 220927/5 Town Clerk to contact both the library and museum to offer the condolence book to be housed in their buildings.

- b To receive an update on the proposal to commission a Memorial Bench. As the result of an offer of funding from South Somerset District Council, Bruton Town Council are pooling resources with Castle Cary Town Council. Castle Cary Town Council will action the procurement process to obtain three quotations and proceed with an order.

It was proposed and RESOLVED to site the memorial bench at Jubilee Park (10-0-0).

22/105: Bruton Supports Ukraine.

At the start of the crisis in Ukraine, the national homes for Ukraine was established, but with no vision beyond the first six month period. Due to the lack of available rental property in Bruton and surrounding area, it is difficult for Ukrainian refugees living in the area to move into their own homes.

The principal authorities receive significant funding to support refugees in Somerset. There is a Bristol Scheme where landlords receive a welcome payment, and the Council will provide funding to assist refugees.

It is proposed that the Town Council brings to the attention of our principal authorities the services offered by Bristol City Council to assist refugees in moving onto the local housing market, and request that our principal authorities initiate something similar in Somerset.

It was RESOLVED to support the motion to request that the principal authorities initiate an assistance program to support refugees in moving onto the local housing market (9-1-0).

Action 220927/6 Town Clerk to work with Cllr Jones and write to the principal authority.

22/106: Picnic tables and benches

There are no quotes available for consideration. Comments were made regarding the style of benches, and whether alternative seating or a more flexible use of the area can be considered. Consulting with the community, in particular residents near to the area, is important.

To conclude, an online and paper survey is to be conducted and notices placed on the existing benches to obtain feedback directly,

Action 220927/7 Cllr Hood to organise an online survey. Cllrs Fradley, Crawford and Jones to speak with nearby residents.

22/107: Local Community Networks

There is currently an online consultation regarding the geography and function of Local Community Networks (LCN) in the new Unitary Council, due to be in place on 1st April 2023. Councillors are to respond to the consultation individually, the consultation closes on 17th October 2022.

The Health and Wellbeing LCN meeting, postponed earlier this month, is taking place on 29th September.

22/108: Cemetery Administration

- a** Software for cemetery administration and record keeping.

A quote has been obtained for Scribe cemetery software, which will enable digital storage of cemetery records.

It was RESOLVED (10-0-0) to use Scribe cemetery software as per the quote received.

Action 220927/8 Town Clerk to liaise with the RFO to proceed with the quote, when the Town Clerk starts in post in November 2022

- b** The purchase of a fire-resistant safe for the safe-keeping of statutory cemetery records. Quotes for two suitable fire-resistant safes were considered for safe storage of cemetery records. The safe will also be used to store other important documents.

It was RESOLVED (8-2-0) to purchase the larger safe (£1107 nett).

Action 220927/9 RFO to place the order for the safe.

22/109: External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/2022 – section 3

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been audited and the following matters have been raised:

- The smaller authority has not addressed the ‘except for’ matters raised by the external auditor when qualifying the prior year annual return. Boxes 4 and 6 have not been restated to £30,495 and £73,203.
- The AGAR has not been approved in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015: Section 2 was not signed by the Responsible Financial Officer before approval.

The conclusion of audit papers have been published on the Town Council website.

The receipt of the AGAR, and the matters raised, has been noted.

22/110: Appointment of External Auditor.

The Small Authorities Audit Appointment (SAAA) is procuring the services of an External Auditor for the next five years (2022-23 to 2026-27). Approval is required from the Council to continue to opt into the procurement process.

It was RESOLVED to remain opted into the SAAA procurement process for an external auditor for the next five year period (10-0-0).

22/111: Bank Reconciliations

To note the bank reconciliations for all current and deposit accounts to 31st August 2022. Cllr Jones signed the bank reconciliation and supporting bank statements.

22/112: Budget Position

To note the current budget report to 31st August 2022. Cllr Jones signed the budget report as provided.

It was suggested that the finance papers, and other meeting papers, are made accessible to the public on the Town Council website.

Action 220927/10: the Town Clerk to work with Cllr Anderton and establish a way forward to publish meeting papers on the website for public accessibility.

22/113: Receipts and Payments

To note the receipts and payments for the period of 1st August 2022 to 31st August 2022. Cllr Jones signed the receipts and payments summary as provided.

22/114: Accounts for Payment.

To approve the schedule of payments for September 2022 and note the direct debit payments.

‘Grounds Maintenance’ was clarified. It was also noted that the grounds maintenance require renewing before the end of the financial year.

It was RESOLVED (10-0-0) to approve the schedule of payment and to note the direct debit payments.

22/115: New Clerk.

To receive an update on transitional arrangements.

The new Town Clerk was acting as clerk to this meeting. There will be a period of one day a week working in October, and then four to five days before the official start date of 23rd November. The Town Clerk will be working four days a week, hybrid working.

22/116: Reports. To receive reports from:

- a Members representing the council on outside bodies.
 - Cllr Robinson reported that the library management committee met briefly on 8th September, but the meeting was curtailed due to the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The intention is to proceed with the building extension, which will be funded by grant applications.

- Cllr Baker overviewed the engagement with the County FA regarding the sports pitches at Jubilee Park. This will be a four year project. The works will need to be agreed between the contractor and Town Council and will be working towards sports pitches to be proud of.

b Town Councillors

- Cllr Crawford reported about the hedge at Cuckoo Hill allotments. The hedge has been cut back in some areas. Residents have complained that the hedge is now uneven, but the works are not yet completed.
- Cllr Hood gave a short verbal report regarding footpaths. The new owner of Gants Mill is keen about making land available to the wider community and is favourable about footpaths and a bridleway.
- Cllr Baker raised a point about the value of councillor training, and that notification of available training had not been circulated.

c Chairman

- Cllr Jones shared that to be Chairman of the Town Council and read the proclamation for HM Queen Elizabeth II is a huge honour.
- Cllr Jones attended a Pitcombe Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 13th September 2022 to provide an update on discussions with King’s School about the Bruton School for Girl’s site.
- The Local Community Network meeting is on Thursday 29th September 2022 at the community hall.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm

Chairman

Date

Appendix

Public session opened at 7:30pm.

Some 40 (approximately) members of the public attended the Full Town Council meeting on 27th September 2022, to comment about item 8 on the agenda MTIG and Station Road car park

- There was a great deal of support for the refurbishment of the Station Road car park to secure its future.
- Substantial concern about localised congestion, and that more car parking is required.
- Car park availability is a priority as per the Town Plan 2017
- Lack of car parking exacerbated for those providing childcare for residents (grandparents, external childcare providers) and no parking available.
- The school is increasing in size. Car parking needs to be taken seriously, the volume of traffic via the narrow access is busy which causes a safety issue.
- Local business owners stated it is difficult to promote their businesses in Bruton with a lack of parking, for instance customers arriving but unable to park and leave again.
- Little agreement that renovating the car park would not provide additional space.
- Renovating the car park is an investment for improvement. Part of the vision is to expand, and there needs to be a starting point.
- Comments from the last Full Council meeting imply that the lack of parking only affects businesses and not residents; this is not true, thriving businesses will impact on residents lives also.
- Retail has suffered post COVID, every sale counts. It is difficult to continue if parking availability is restricted. Shops in the High Street provide a service for residents and non-residents
- The car park has been an issue for about 60 years, this is the time to seize the day.
- Available parking is important for family and friends visiting Bruton, to park when they stay. Why is the refurbishment not going ahead? What is happening with the money set aside?
- Staffing issues in local businesses are not helped by the poor availability of parking. One business owner had a staff member leave their employment due to lack of parking and the additional stress caused by attending for work and being unable to park.
- Every sale in a retail and food industry outlet is crucial to survival, and this is exacerbated by poor parking.
- Elderly people are affected by the lack of parking. Older members of the community are reluctant or not able to walk into town but won't drive as there is no guarantee to be able to park their vehicle.
- The museum is planning to expand over the next few years due to grant funding. There will be evening functions, longer opening hours, and a festival of people, all of which require parking to be available. The end goal is for the museum to be sustainable

- Often the High Street is blocked due to inconsiderate parking, creating an obstacle. This situation occurs almost daily. Further concerns of a similar nature and Emergency Services being able to pass through freely and without any holdup.
- A possible vision is a series of satellite car parks in Bruton, which will reduce on street parking and traffic through the centre of the town.
- The car parking issue has been debated for some time. The council has blown an opportunity to refurbish the car park, with the decision made last month.
- Listen to the residents and what they would like.
- Frequent maintenance is not sustainable or effective.
- 15 years left on the lease for the car park is not a short amount of time, but it is significant time in the eyes of residents and business owners.

A member of the public raised a question about the consultation process regarding the agenda for Full Council and committee meetings, with members of the public and residents.

- Members of the public and residents are encouraged to contact the town clerk or councillors directly.
- The agenda for meetings are published within guidelines and timescales, and can be found on the Town Council website, the community office, noticeboards within the parish
- A general survey of residents would be helpful to obtain feedback regarding ‘what works well’, ‘ what would work better’. Refreshing the Town Plan early 2023 will provide an opportunity for a survey, and councillors welcome assistance from the public with this.
- The Town Committee meetings were mentioned, and that this committee is also an excellent forum to raise Town issues.

Public session closed at 7:54 pm.