

**Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on 30th October 2023
in the Council Chamber, The Old Courthouse, Jaycroft Road,
Burnham-on-Sea at 7 pm**

Present: Councillors L. Millard (Chair), R. Baker, P. Clayton, A. Elrick, M. Facey, G. Gudka, R. Keen, A. Mathews, B. Metcalfe, M. Murphy S. Perry, C. Searing, B. Vickers, J. Warren, P. Wynn

In attendance: K Noble, Town Clerk and 6 members of the public.

Public Participation:

A resident raised concerns regarding the fireworks event going ahead on Sunday, given the current tragic circumstances.

Before the start of the meeting a minute's silence was held in thought of the missing man, his family, friends and the emergency services involved.

139.0.T23 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Barber and Flurry.

140.0.T23 To receive any declarations of interest on items included on this agenda

There were no declarations of interest received.

141.0.T23 To receive and approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 19th September 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Town Council, held on 19th September 2023, were presented by the Mayor.

(1 member of the public joined the meeting at this juncture)

Resolved that the minutes be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

142.0.T23 Matters arising from previous minutes

The meeting with GWR still hasn't been arranged, due to the lack of response from GWR.

The letter to the Education Authority has been sent.

Councillors Millard and Vickers had met with a Somerset Council Officer regarding the 20 mph scheme and a report will be presented to the next meeting.



**Burnham-on-Sea
& Highbridge**
TOWN COUNCIL

143.0.T23 To receive Mayors report

The Mayor read out the following statement;

“Thank you to Andrew Morgan for his time with the Council. An election will be held on 18th December 2023 to fill the vacancy. Further information will be published in due course.

This last few weeks have been marred by my testing positive for Covid and losing a week of my time. I am pleased to say that Councillor Perry kindly stepped up and took over my commitments for that week.

The last few weeks have been dominated by the Eco Festival which was held in Apex Park on the afternoon of October 30th. We met our objectives of celebrating the hard work of the Working Group and also raising awareness of ways in which the public can make a difference. Just making one change in their lives would equate to 22,000 changes in our towns. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who worked so hard to make the event a success. Our Council staff, Ian Jefferies and of course all those brilliant volunteers on the day! It was really rewarding to see so many children engaged in environmental activities. The Bug Hotel was a great success and is a legacy that has been left in Apex Park.

I have also been working with Clean Surroundings and the Growing Group to improve the green spaces. We are now working in partnership with Burnham in Bloom to look at ways of improving the types of plants in the flower beds. We need coastal planting that ensures we have plants that are happy in a seaside resort but are also hardy to climate change. They will also need less maintenance. We have a meeting with Clean Surroundings on 9th November.

The Bus Users Group continues to push for improvement in the bus service. You will see an item on the agenda that has come from a meeting with Somerset Councillor Mike Rigby. The group now has a Facebook page to help improve communication between the users and the bus company.

I attended the Climate Adaptation Training at Morland Hub. It was really interesting as we explored data about our local area. We then started to think of how we could plan to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change. This is an important element of our Climate Action plan and much of what we are doing will actually assist this development. There will be an opportunity for the community to contribute to the action plan later in the year.



I had the pleasure of visiting Weston Hospice in Uphill. I joined the Mayor of Weston super Mare on a tour of their new facilities. They are hoping to set up a Friends of Weston Hospice in Burnham and Highbridge as they support so many of our residents.

I also enjoyed attending a fundraising event for the Friends of Burnham Memorial Hospital. It was a good opportunity to thank them for their work to enhance the provision at our local hospital. I also joined the Dementia Friendly Service at St Andrews Church. This service offers support and comfort to those who attend.

I was invited to open the Hornby Railway Association Annual Show. It was fascinating to talk to enthusiasts about what for many has been a lifetime hobby. It was good to see such a thriving group in our community.

Councillor Perry attended the meeting that the Council called to enable residents who were affected by recent visits from travellers to the Bay Centre to talk to representatives from the Police and Somerset Council”.

Councillor Perry gave an overview of the public meeting held at The Bay Centre. The meeting was an opportunity for residents to raise their very real concerns and to pose questions to Jonathan Eamer, Neighbourhood Police Sergeant of Somerset and Avon Constabulary and Chris Hall, Executive Director of Community Services at Somerset Council. Notes from the meeting are available on the Council’s website.

Councillor Keen had attended a number of engagements including Axbridge and Blackberry Carnival, North Petherton Service, NHS AGM, Armed Forces Covenant Conference, BARB AGM and the Somerset Council Award Ceremony.

144.0.T23 To receive any reports from Somerset Councillors

A report was circulated by Somerset Councillor Murphy, which are attached to the minutes.

Somerset Councillor Clayton added that the Council is in a very difficult financial position and a Section 114 notice could be in place as early as February 2024.

It was noted that many councils are struggling financially.

145.0.T23 To receive minutes of previous committee meetings

Princess Management Committee – 26th September

Councillor Perry gave a summary of the minutes and confirmed that copies of the theatre brochure were available. There were no questions.

Planning Committee – 3rd October and 18th October

Councillor Elrick presented the minutes from the last two meetings and no questions were raised.



Finance and Resources Committee – 16th October

Councillor Gudka gave a brief overview of the minutes. No issues were raised.

146.0.T23 To receive list of payments up to 18th October 2023

The attached list of payments was received and noted and no queries raised.

147.0.T23 To receive Town Council Accounts up to 20th October 2023

The accounts up to 20th October. It was clarified that the monies currently in the miscellaneous income heading are confirmed as CIL monies and will be journaled accordingly.

148.0.T23 To receive reports from town councillor representatives appointed to outside bodies

Councillor Matthews attended the Sea Cadet AGM with the Mayor.

149.0.T23 To receive Working Group update reports

- Town Board – The first meeting was held in October and Ruth Ackroyd was elected as the Chair and the terms of reference were updated.
- Climate and Ecology – The major work over this last few weeks has been the Eco festival.

The Repair Cafes are doing well with enthusiastic volunteers.

The Growing Group is working in partnership with Clean Surroundings and Burnham in Bloom to improve planting in our green spaces. They are aiming to have coastal planting that is resistant to climate change.

Plastic Free Group continues to encourage businesses to sign up as Refill Centres.

Somerset Wildlife Trust and Our Highbridge continue to offer opportunities for our community to engage in the development of the Brue Green Pathway.

At the next Working Group meeting last year's plans will be reviewed and a new action plan produced.

- Highbridge Regeneration – A meeting with Highbridge Councillors to set the terms of reference and who to invite onto the group has been arranged for later in the week.



- Office Accommodation – There has been a delay with being able to contact Somerset Council staff, but negotiations are taking place following the valuation of the former SS&L building.
- Homelessness – The full report was attached to the agenda. Councillor Baker gave an overview of the report. The Group were thanked for all their work to date.
- Princess Theatre Review – Two meetings have taken place and a questionnaire sent out to other Theatres in the South West. Three theatres have been identified for a visit.

150.0.T23 To note the Interim External Audit report and Objection to 2022/23 AGAR

Councillor Gudka confirmed that Section 3 of the AGAR had not been completed by the External Auditor. A member of the public had raised some questions relating to the Theatre and the Council's answers were not accepted. The External Auditor will now follow due process and it was noted this would have an impact on staff time and further costs.

151.0.T23 To note response to Somerset Council's consultation on planning policy principles

The response was noted.

152.0.T23 To consider response to the consultation on the proposal to remove the public payphone and telephone kiosk in Princess Street, Burnham-on-Sea

Resolved that the Council object to removal of the phone box. In case of emergency (if it ever saves one life, then it's worth every penny), mobile network connectivity or charging issues, those that do not use a mobile device, homeless without means of communication (especially during the night, where there are no duty or commissioned teams available to send out) and to report anti-social behaviour or vandalism. The Council will express an interest in BT's newer Street Hubs.

153.0.T23 To consider recommendation from the Planning Committee to support a crossing being installed on Marine Drive

Resolved that the Council support the request for a crossing to be installed in Marine Drive.

154.0.T23 To consider endorsing a letter from the Burnham and Highbridge Bus Users Group to Somerset Councillor Rigby

The Mayor gave some background information relating to the request.

Resolved that the Council endorses the letter to Somerset Councillor Rigby.



155.0.T23 To pass a resolution to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge and to note the Civility and Respect roles and responsibilities document

The pledge statement was reviewed item by item. The roles and responsibilities were noted and it was suggested that they are attached to the Standing Orders.

Resolved that the Council agrees to the Civility and Respect statement and signs up to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

156.0.T23 To review and adopt a Civility and Respect Dignity at Work Policy

The circulated report was reviewed.

Resolved that the Civility and Respect Dignity at Work Policy is adopted.

157.0.T23 To review and adopt Freedom of Information Policy statement

Resolved that the Freedom of Information Policy statement is adopted.

158.0.T23 To review and adopt updated Publication Scheme

Resolved that the updated Publication Scheme is adopted.

159.0.T23 To review and update the Strategic Plan

The report was noted and no further amendments made.

160.0.T23 To consider a response to Somerset Council's consultation on the Equality Objectives for the period April 2024 to April 2026

Resolved that the Council agreed to prioritise the numbers stated as - 5,4,3,6,1,2. Residents and Councillors are encouraged to respond to the consultation.

161.0.T23 To consider supporting the Climate and Ecology Bill

Resolved that the Council supports the Climate and Ecology Bill and writes to James Heappy MP to inform him of the Council's decision and urge him to sign up to support the Bill. The Council will write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing the Council's support.

162.0.T23 To consider a response to the Fire Service Council Tax consultation

(Councillor Clayton did not participate in the discussion or vote due to membership of DFSRA)

Resolved that the Council would not respond, but encourage residents to respond directly.

163.0.T23 Date of next meeting

Resolved: The next meeting of the Town Council will be on 12th December 2023 at 7 pm.