



GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on **Monday 24th July 2023** at The Town Hall, Gillingham, commencing at 7.30pm.

Present:

Cllr Barry von Clemens, Mayor
Cllr Roger Weeks, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Graham Bashford
Cllr Fiona Cullen
Cllr Sharon Cullingford
Cllr Rupert Evill
Cllr Alan Frith

Cllr Mick Hill
Cllr John Kilcourse
Cllr Graham Poulter
Cllr Val Potheary
Cllr Sarah Snook
Cllr Mark Walden
Cllr David Walsh

In attendance:

Julie Hawkins, Town Clerk
Jill Ezzard, Assistant Town Clerk
Jake Parry, RiversMeet General Manager
Phil Sylvester CBE, Chairman GCLT
One member of the public

Via MS Teams:

Andrew Galpin MRTPI, Dorset Council Infrastructure and Delivery Planning Manager
Michael Streeter, Gillingham and Shaftesbury News

Prior to the start of the meeting, there was a presentation by Phil Sylvester CBE, Chairman of Gillingham Community Leisure Trust and Jake Parry, RiversMeet General Manager.

1096. Public Participation. Please note: a period up to a maximum of fifteen minutes will be allowed for public comments and questions restricted to items listed on the following agenda.

Cllr Potheary thanked Mr Sylvester and Mr Parry for an informative presentation and asked how many GP referrals are received by RiversMeet. Mr Parry informed the meeting that RiversMeet currently have 41 GP referrals who are undertaking a bespoke training programme.

Cllr Cullingford asked if the venues are available to hire for events. Mr Parry confirmed that both sites are available to hire and gave examples of several forthcoming events including a boxing showcase, men's health event, Christmas craft fair at RiversMeet and charity bingo at the Brickfields site.

Cllr Potheary asked whether the premises has a licence for gambling to cover the bingo nights. Mr Parry stated that it was his understanding that a licence is not required as they are charity events raising money for good causes, however, he will check the regulations.

1097. To receive apologies for absence

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies for absence from Cllr Harris, Cllr Toye and Cllr A von Clemens who were unable to join the meeting for personal reasons.

1098. Declarations of Interest: Members are required to comply with the requirements of Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Walden declared a personal interest in Agenda item no 12, as a Trustee of GCLT.

Cllr Walsh informed the meeting that, as he is the Dorset Council Portfolio holder for Planning, he would leave the Council Chamber during the consideration of Agenda Item 12.

1099. To receive questions pertaining to the previous minutes

There were no questions.

1100. To approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the Full Council meeting held on 26th June and the Extra-ordinary Full Council meeting held on 3rd July 2023.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 26th June and the Extra-ordinary Full Council meeting held on 3rd July 2023 as a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

1101. To approve payments of £10,000 and over.

There were no payments of £10,000 and over.

1102. To receive and consider a Health and Safety Report

A report was received prior to the meeting.

The report was noted.

1103. To receive, consider and adopt the draft minutes of the following standing committees:

a) General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 3rd July 2023

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the General Purposes meeting held on Monday 3rd July 2023 are approved and adopted.

b) Planning Committee meetings held on Monday 26th June 2023 and Monday 10th July 2023

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on Monday 26th June 2023 and Monday 10th July 2023 are approved and adopted.

c) HR Committee meeting held on Monday 27th June 2023

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the HR Committee meeting held on Monday 27th June 2023 are approved and adopted.

d) Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on Monday 17th July 2023

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on Monday 17th July 2023 are approved and adopted.

1104. To receive and consider reports from sub-committees and task and finish groups, as follows:

a) Five Year Action Plan Sub-committee

There has been no meeting.

b) Sports and Leisure Panel

There has been no meeting.

c) Neighbourhood Plan Sub-committee

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix A.](#)

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that a Level 3 (major modifications) review of the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan is undertaken.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Town Hall staff are relocated to man the Council's stand at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show on 16 and 17 August 2023 and the Town Hall is closed on those days.

A draft questionnaire had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the draft questionnaire, as presented with the addition of a map, is approved for use at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show.

1105. To receive and consider reports from outside bodies, if available:

a) Town Meadow Group (Cllr Toye)

There was no report. Cllr Cullingford informed members that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 July 2023 between the Town Meadow Group and Gillingham Town Council.

b) Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Cllr B von Clemens)

Cllr von Clemens informed the meeting that there will be a North Dorset networking event at Gillingham Town Hall on Thursday 10th August at 6pm. The Visit Dorset Team and the North Dorset Tourism Group will be attending this free networking event.

c) Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) Larger Town meetings (Cllr B von Clemens)

There was no report.

d) Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) Northern Area meetings (Cllr Cullingford and Cllr Weeks)

Cllr Cullingford reported that Gillingham Town Council had hosted a meeting of the Northern Area Committee at Gillingham Town Hall on Thursday 29th June 2023. The meeting was well attended.

e) Gillingham Transport Forum (Cllr B von Clemens)

There was no report.

f) Gillingham Youth Centre Management Committee (Cllr B von Clemens)

There has been no meeting.

g) Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership (Cllr Walden)

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix B.](#)

Members raised concerns over the proposed changes.

1106. To consider sending a letter to South Western Railway regarding the proposed Ticket Office closures

A draft letter had been circulated to members. It was agreed that the draft letter should be amended to state that there is a high number of older people living in Gillingham who may require extra assistance.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the letter, as amended, will be sent to South Western Railway expressing the Town Council's objection to the proposed Ticket Office closures.

1107. To consider granting support for an application from Gillingham Community Leisure Trust (GCLT) to Dorset Council to draw down Section 106 funding. Please refer to the S106 agreement

Cllr Walden and Cllr Walsh left the Council Chamber at 7.55pm.

Information had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Chairman informed members that the Dorset Council Infrastructure and Delivery Planning Manager, Andrew Galpin, has confirmed that he has the articles of association submitted with the application which demonstrate GCLT have powers to 'maintain, manage, construct and alter any buildings or erections and to equip and fit out any property and buildings for use and make planning applications. Mr Galpin has also confirmed that he is satisfied that the application is valid and the evidence demonstrating this meets the requirements of the s106 protocol.

It was unanimously agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council supports the application from Gillingham Community Leisure Trust (GCLT) to Dorset Council to draw down Section 106 funding to the value of £57,456.86, on the condition that any underspend on this project and it's associated costs will be returned to the awarding authority (Dorset Council), while any overspend will be covered by GCLT's trading income.

Cllr Walden and Cllr Walsh re-joined the meeting at 8.01pm.

1108. To receive and consider a report regarding the purchase of laptops for use by Councillors

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix C](#).

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Councillors are offered the opportunity to have a laptop, supplied by the Town Council for the sole purpose of conducting Council business.

Cllr Frith, Cllr Potheary, Cllr B von Clemens and Cllr Walsh voted against the proposal.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that laptops are returned to the Town Council when Councillors leave office.

Cllr Frith abstained from voting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that laptops for Councillors are leased from Dorset Council and funded from Budget no. 7705 at a cost of £460 + VAT per year per laptop.

Cllr Frith, Cllr Potheary, Cllr B von Clemens and Cllr Walsh voted against the proposal.

1109. To receive and consider a request from the Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership to use the Town Council Crest

A copy of the correspondence had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to the [Appendix D](#).

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership is granted permission to use the Gillingham Town Council logo for the certificates to go alongside the rail partnership logo.

1110. To receive a report on the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's civic activities

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix E](#)

The report was noted.

1111. To receive and note reports from Dorset Councillors, if available

A report from Cllr Belinda Ridout was circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix F](#)

The report was noted.

Cllr Walsh gave the following verbatim report:

As you are probably aware, the national legislative requirement for delivery of a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) linked to development comes in to force this November.

I wanted to make you aware of Dorset Council BNG Guidance for Applicants and Agents v1.0 which has been completed. The document is iterative and will be updated as more information is released by government over the next few months. We hope it provides a useful starting point for applicants and agents (and others) to help clarify the background to BNG and how Dorset will make it work.

This Guidance for Applicants and Agents is part of Dorset Council's response to the global loss of biodiversity, with a focus on the Council's position with regard to biodiversity net gain (BNG). The guidance sets out current policy on BNG within the Dorset Council area and what the Council will expect from planning applications submitted from the relevant date in November 2023 onwards, when delivery of a minimum 10% BNG becomes mandatory for most applications.

So, what is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is "all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area – the variety of animals, plants, fungi and even microorganisms like bacteria, that make up our natural world".

Biodiversity Net Gain is defined as "an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand".

BNG goes beyond like for like replacement of habitat lost to development, and results in an overall gain in habitat – so that the development site provides more opportunities for nature than was the case previously.

In many cases this will also provide additional recreation, health and wellbeing opportunities for local communities as well as contributing to wider carbon reduction and environmental net gain".

1112. To receive matters pertinent to this meeting

- a) Cllr Cullingford thanked Cllr Walden and Cllr Weeks for attending a recent meeting of the Dorset Council Northern Area Planning Committee on behalf of Gillingham Town Council.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Full Council – 24 July 2023

Minute no. 1104c

Gillingham Town Council

Neighbourhood Plan Sub-committee

Author: Serena Burgess, Projects and HR Admin Officer

Notes of a meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Sub-committee held on 3 July 2023.

Present: Cllr Sharon Cullingford, Cllr John Kilcourse, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr David Walsh, Julie Hawkins (Town Clerk)

Apologies: Cllr Mick Hill, Cllr Graham Poulter, Cllr Sarah Snook

1. Elect a Lead Member

Cllr Cullingford was elected as Lead member.

2. Agree a Level 3 Review (major modifications)

It was agreed that a Level 3 review is required.

3. Nominate a Councillor to update Policy 21 and consult the Allotments and Burials sub-committee on an area for a new cemetery

It was agreed that Cllr Poulter would undertake this action.

4. Nominate a Councillor to investigate funding

It was agreed that Cllr Poulter would undertake this action.

5. Nominate a Councillor to investigate consultation opportunities

It was agreed that Cllr Walsh would undertake this action.

6. Nominate a Councillor to draft survey questions

It was agreed that Cllr Potheary would undertake this action.

7. Agree the themes (Housing, Economy, Retail & Town Centre Uses, Transport, Community Facilities, Green & Urban Spaces, Design, Climate Change & Renewable Energy, Heritage) and nominate Councillors to take ownership of each theme

It was agreed that Design should be incorporated into the Housing theme.

The themes were allocated as follows:

- Housing – Cllr Walsh
- Economy – Cllr Hill
- Retail & Town Centre Uses – Cllr Snook
- Transport – Cllr Cullingford
- Community Facilities - Cllr Kilcourse
- Green & Urban Spaces – Cllr Kilcourse
- Climate Change & Renewable Energy – Cllr Poulter
- Heritage – Cllr Potheary

8. Consider the recruitment of an Officer to help re-write the Neighbourhood Plan and assist with consultations

The Town Clerk expressed concern about the practicality of recruiting someone with no knowledge or experience of this subject. It was agreed to reconsider this at a suitable time.

9. Agree timetable of meetings

- The next meeting will be held on Monday 17 July at 11.00 am – to discuss/agree the consultation questions
- Regular meetings will be booked on the 4th Friday of each month at 11.00 am starting on 28 July

All meetings will take place on MS Teams

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That a Level 3 (major modifications) review of the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan is undertaken.
- That the Town Hall staff are relocated to man the Council's stand at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show on 16 & 17 August 2023 and the Town Hall is closed on those days.

Full Council – 24 July 2023

Minute no. 1105g

Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership Report

Author: Cllr Mark Walden – 10/07/2023

Train Ticket Station Closures

You may have heard on the news that The Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents train companies have announced some considerable changes with how we buy our tickets. This will result in almost all of the 1,007 remaining ticket stations across England being impacted with permanent closures or the reduction of operating hours.

According to the RDG, only 12% of tickets were purchased through these stations and is reducing year on year. This, along with pressures from the government with budgeting, this has caused them to rethink on how tickets are purchased in the future.

So, what does this mean for Gillingham Train Station?

Every train station under SWR is under 4 categories, each category has a number of changes which is explained on the table below:

Station category	Level of staffing	Example stations	Number of stations
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleagues with full retailing capability and expertise available to support retail choices and other customer needs until full transition to digital retail Ticketing vending machines 	Waterloo Salisbury Guildford Basingstoke	24
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple colleagues available to support retail choices and other customer needs Ticket vending machines 	Brockenhurst Godalming Wokingham Twickenham	33
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One colleague available to support retail choices and other customer needs Ticket vending machines 	Hampton Wick St Denys Wool Honiton	97
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will continue to be unstaffed as today Ticket vending machines 	Botley Holton Heath Dean Grateley	36

Gillingham Station is rated a **category 3** station which is where over half of all stations will fall under. This will mean that one member of staff will be at the station, not selling tickets but going out of the ticket office and assisting passengers with purchasing tickets through other means such as a mobile device.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is intended across **all** categories that a phasing out of ticket stations will happen in the future,,including London stations.

In addition to this, there will be reduced staffing hours at the station. The table below is the proposal for Gillingham Station. As you can see, currently we have 78.5 hours of staffing hours to assist with ticket sales and this will reduce to 38.7 hours, which is a reduction of over 50% with Sunday being completely unstaffed.

Gillingham – Category 3

Transport Focus will be running the consultation for this station

	Current ticket office opening hours	Proposed station staffing hours
Monday	6:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Tuesday	6:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Wednesday	6:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Thursday	6:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Friday	6:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Saturday	7:00am - 6:00pm	6:00am - 12:45pm
Sunday	9:30am - 5:00pm	Unstaffed

It is important to note however that SWR says that they will '*continue to meet all our commitments on providing accessibility for passengers, including passengers with reduced mobility and people requiring in-person assistance*'. Despite this, as there will be limited staffing available, passengers who require boarding assistance will likely have to book in advance and contact SWR Assisted Travel Team.

SWR have also stated they are reinvesting on their ticket vending machines to include video-calling to allow customers to interact with staff at a central base.

Concerns

Consulting with a number of constituents via. social media and in-person. They have raised some serious concerns including:

- Disabled and vulnerable passengers rely on ticket stations who have very limited or no access to devices to purchase tickets online
- Confidence in ticket vending machines remain low with consumers unsure if they are getting the best deal at that given time
- Assistance with boarding and alighting is limited with passengers requiring to book ahead in advance in many occasions

- Gillingham Station serves approximately 450,000 passengers per year. If 12% of passengers currently use ticket stations, this will **likely impact around 54,000 journeys per year**
- I would argue SWR statement regarding customer interaction stating that staff will be out of the ticket stations and interacting with passengers. This is unlikely as staffing hours is proposed to decrease by more than 50% so, if anything, we will see less interaction with passengers
- As consultations are only lasting for 21 days, I feel this is insufficient time to capture every passenger's views and how this will impact people
- With ticket fares at an all-time high, increased disruptions from strikes, passengers are increasingly losing their confidence in their railway and will consider other forms of transport or not travel at all
- Gillingham Station is used by many school students who study inside and outside of Gillingham. If the station is unstaffed after 12:45pm before schools close then this poses a safeguarding risk to students returning home

Consultations

The consultations end on the **26th of July** which is very short as consultations go. At the time of our Full Council Meeting, we will only have 2 days to respond. It is unclear on the next steps and when these proposals would be implemented, if they do go ahead. I have communicated to all councillors and staff prior of this report and I strongly support Gillingham Town Council to write a letter of objection to these proposals.

Important Links & Emails

SWR Proposals - <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/station-change-proposal>

Consultations :

Email: TicketOffice.SWR@transportfocus.org.uk

Freepost: RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ, Transport Focus, PO Box 5594, Southend on Sea, SS1 9PZ

For more information about how to have your say see www.transportfocus.org.uk

Email: SWR.Consultation@Londontravelwatch.org.uk

Freepost: RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ, London TravelWatch, PO Box 5594, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9PZ

For more information about how to have your say see www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership Stations In Bloom Visit

The tour will commence on the 18th of July which is after the time of this report and before the next Full Council meeting. I am intending to attend on that day which the judges are expected to arrive around 11:53am.

Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership Passenger Survey Results

As discussed in previous meetings, I'm pleased to say that the survey results are now ready to view and have been circulated with this report.

The focus was to capture passengers views on our line, especially after lockdown. The survey was run between June-October 2022. Survey was posted to 900 passengers returning 246 responses which was a 27.3% response/return rate.

Here is a summary of the main findings:

- 41% of respondents to the survey were very regular users (weekly) of the line, increasing to 68.6% when adding those using the service on a monthly basis.
- 94.1% of all respondents used BVCRP 6 Stations (including Gillingham), increasing to 97.6% using the station along the Salisbury to Exeter route.
- 58.7% or over half of the respondents cited the location of station to home address was the biggest influencing factor for choosing the particular station.
- 59.5% of respondents either walk or drive and park at the station.
- 62.8% of respondents graded 3 and below expressing disappointment with the frequency of trains as opposed to 36.8% who rated the service 4 and above.
- 50% of respondents graded station facilities above average, towards exceptional. Disappointments in toilet facilities especially at Gillingham station.
- Ease of use of ticket machine if no staff present - 40.1% gave a 4-5 difficulty rating, rising to 69.1% is graded 3 and above.
- 80.4% have access to online timetables.
- 40.1% give access to online timetables 4-5 difficulty rating – adding in 3 rating and the figure is 70%.
- 81.9% of respondents want printed timetables.
- 86.4% of respondents want printed posters at stations.
- 80.7% of respondents rated having a buffet service 3-5 high priority.
- 88.2% respondents would recommend travelling on Exeter to London line.

Full Council – 26 June 2023

Minute no. 1070

Gillingham Town Council

The Purchase of Councillor Laptops

Author: Jill Ezzard, Assistant Town Clerk

At the Full Council meeting on 26th April 2021 the Town Council approved and adopted a Data Protection Compliance Report from the council's Data Protection Officer. The report highlighted the town council's legal obligations to ensure all the personal data is under their security control. The report recommended that, if possible, devices are provided to councillors for the purposes of conducting town council business.

It should be noted that if a freedom of Information (FOI) request or a Subject Access Request (SAR) is received by Gillingham Town Council, councillors may be asked to search their own devices for any information relevant to the request and make a record of the search that they undertook. If the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has reason to believe information is being concealed, they can obtain a search warrant to check the devices for themselves.

Officers are aware of several councillors who are struggling with their personal IT equipment and one councillor has been informed by Dorset Council that the system they run will no longer support their councillor emails.

Dorset Council, who currently supply the council's IT equipment, has confirmed that cyber security health checks have been undertaken to ensure compliance with government standards and some devices will soon to be out of compliance. It may be possible to upgrade devices to a newer operating system but councillors must ensure compliance and there should be no exceptions.

Within the town council's budget for 2023/24, £14,000 was allocated under budget no. 7705 - IT Leasing Costs, plus £4,976.00 was earmarked, giving a total of £18,976.00. This amount was for additional councillor laptops and staff IT costs. In the FY 2022/23 staff IT costs came to £3,907.50 + VAT and it is expected to remain the same for 2023/24.

Dorset Council and two local companies have provided quotations for new laptops.

	Dorset Council	Company B	Company C
Mid-range Laptop	Leased £460.00 + Vat per year including a separate screen if required.	Purchased Lenovo i5 Processor with	Purchased Lenovo V15 G2 ALC Laptop, 15.6" FHD Ryzen 3 5300U 8GB, 256GB SSD

	Dorset Council	Company B	Company C
		256Gb SSD and 8Gb of ram. £394.80 + Vat	USB-C Windows 11 Pro £315.00 + Vat
Premium Laptop		Lenovo i7 Processor with 512Gb SSD and 16Gb Ram £620.40 + Vat	Microsoft Surface Go Laptop 12.4" Touchscreen Fingerprint reader i5-1035G1 16GB Ram 256GB SSD USB-C Windows 10 Pro £609.00 + Vat
Setup fee & support fees	Included	£48.00 per hour	£35.00 per hour
Microsoft 365	Included	Not included	Not included
Anti-Virus Software	Included	Not Included	Not Included

Both Company B and Company C have advised that the mid-range laptop should be sufficient to suit councillor's requirements.

Microsoft 365 business basic package can be purchased directly from Microsoft at £4.90 + VAT per user per month, £58.80 + VAT per year.

Anti-virus business protection is available to cover 10 devices for £84.99 + VAT per year.

There are two options available to the council:

Option 1 – Lease

- Lease from Dorset Council with full IT support.
- Microsoft 365 and anti-virus software included.
- Updates made to IT equipment when required.
- Laptops replaced when faulty.
- Tried and tested and works well. Dorset Council currently supplies laptops to all Town Council staff and Dorset Councillors (Cllr Potheary and Cllr Walsh).
- Councillor email accounts are already serviced by Dorset Council.
- Replacement laptops will be available for new councillors without clearing the existing set up from departing councillor's laptops.

Option 2 – Purchase

- Purchase mid-range Lenovo laptops from Company C.
- Purchase individual Microsoft 365 business packages which must be renewed each year. This will be time consuming when processing invoicing and amending accounts as councillors come and go.
- Purchase anti-virus package. Town Hall staff will be responsible for renewing package each year and updating users.
- IT upgrades and repairs will be the responsibility of the Town Council which will be charged at an hourly rate by Company C.

Recommendations

- **That councillors are offered the opportunity to have a laptop, supplied by the Town Council for the sole purpose of conducting council business.**
- **That laptops are returned to the Town Council when councillors leave office.**
- **That laptops for councillors are leased from Dorset Council and funded from Budget no. 7705 at a cost of £460 + VAT per year per laptop.**

Full Council – 26 July 2023

Minute no. 1109

The Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership is working with members of Gillingham Town Council on an artwork project for Gillingham Station.

People were invited to submit their favourite images of Gillingham for a photographic competition with the winning images to be displayed at the station. The entries have now been assessed and we are planning to give certificates to the top three photographers in each category.

I am seeking permission to use the Gillingham Town Council logo for the certificates to go alongside the rail partnership logo.

We would like to thank the Mayor Cllr. Barry von Clemens and Cllr. Roger Weeks who gave up their time to form part of the judging team, along with Norman Crabb and Derek Beer. A big thank you to Serena Burgess for her help and assistance with this project.

Kind Regards
Caroline

Partnership Officer for Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership
Working Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday mornings.
Tel: 07933 212 117
Website: www.blackmorevaletrains.com
Twitter: @crpVale

Full Council – 24 July 2023

Minute no. 1110

Gillingham Town Council

Mayor's Report 18th June – 10th July 2023

Date	Event	Comments
21 st June	NORDDIS AGM	It was great to hear that all is going well with the organisation. They are looking forward to the coming year. They are on the hunt for a new treasurer so please if you do know of anyone get in contact with NORDDIS.
25 th June	Wareham Civic Service	An enjoyable morning with Wareham Town Council as they held their Civic Service to mark the start of their new mayor's term of office.
1 st July	Chickerell Civic Day	A fabulous Sunday day at Chickerell with a interesting talk on a local church followed by an afternoon at the Steam fair.
2 nd July	Gillingham Bowling Club 100 th anniversary	It was nice to be invited along to the club to say a few words to mark the club's 100 th anniversary.
3 rd July	Judging Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership photo competition	There were some wonderful entries in this competition, and it was extremely hard to judge. The winning pictures will be displayed at the station. Thanks to the Deputy Mayor for stepping in to help with the judging.
5 th July	NHS 75 th Birthday	A lovely afternoon at the library as the guest of the Gillingham Medical Practice to mark the 75 th birthday of our fabulous NHS.
8 th July	Gillingham Live	A great day on the Town Meadow with a great selection of bands performing throughout the day. Well done to everyone who worked so hard to bring this event to the town.

Full Council – 24 July 2023

Minute no. 1111

Gillingham Dorset Councillor Ward Monthly Report Cllr Belinda Ridout – July 2023

Household Support Fund (HSF) – Round 4 of the HSF re-opened for applications on Tuesday, 4th July for low-income households in the Dorset Council area. Support is in the form of supermarket vouchers. Citizens Advice will be allocating this fund on behalf of Dorset Council and vouchers will be issued to those who meet the eligibility criteria within 6-8 weeks.

Residents should apply online or if residents need help completing the form, they can telephone Customer Services on 01305 221000 or visit a customer access point, our closest being Nordon Lodge (Blandford), 58 Salisbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7LN - open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am to 4pm.

Council Schemes to help households and businesses to save energy – help for residents, communities and businesses in Dorset to reduce energy use and tackle rising costs will continue, having secured funding. Dorset Council has published a draft report which looks at the progress it is making towards climate and ecology goals, which goes before the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 4th July.

Healthy Homes Dorset and **Low Carbon Dorset** are programmes which are a central part of the council's plan to tackle emissions. Healthy Homes Dorset gives free energy advice and helps homeowners and tenants to install wall and loft insulation and fit low-energy heating systems, helping over 600 homes last year. Low Carbon Dorset is aimed at helping organisations rather than households. Through this programme, community groups, charities and businesses can get free advice and grants to help tackle emissions and rising energy costs. Contact details: Healthy Homes Dorset, freephone 0300 003 7023 or go to their website. Low Carbon Dorset: lowcarbondorset.org.uk.

Summer Reading Challenge – children aged 4-11 can get involved in this year's summer Reading Challenge starting 1st July 2023. This year it's all about the power of sports and games. Children can take part with books from Dorset libraries and online via the challenge website, with the opportunity to explore new and exciting reading material, develop skills and discover new interests.

Record number of affordable homes have been built in the last year, responding to the huge need for affordable housing. Working with Registered Provider Housing associations, a total of 664 new affordable homes, including a range of tenures such as rented and shared ownership, including houses for local key workers, were built by Housing Associations or acquired by the council in the year to March 2023 compared to 529 the year before. With the cost of living rising steeply, it is vital that the right kind of affordable housing is in the right place at the right time.

Dogs Consultation – a consultation has started on a new dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The current PSPO is due to expire at the end of the year. The consultation gives people, residents, business owners, organisations and visitors a chance to have their say on where and when they think there should be restrictions on dogs in public places, including beaches and covers topics such as fouling and lead length. The consultation finishes on 25th August. Paper copies will be available in the local library or request by calling 01305 221000.

Unitary ‘savings’ - a total of £96 million has been ‘saved’ since Dorset Council became a unitary council in 2019 through Local Government Reorganisation. This was achieved by bringing together similar services of the former 5 district and borough councils and county council, reducing duplication and costs, increasing efficiency and having fewer councillors and senior officer roles. The ‘savings’ have been reinvested into essential frontline services, protecting them from cuts and focussing on sustainable local services over the longer-term, including children’s social care, road maintenance, libraries, housing, planning and adult social services.

Celebrating 75 years of the NHS – I was invited by Gillingham Medical Practice to Gillingham Library on Wednesday 5th July to celebrate the 75th birthday of the NHS. Dr Geoff Lewis took the opportunity to thank all those who volunteered their help during the Covid pandemic, helping to collect and deliver prescriptions to the more vulnerable in the community. Patients with a 75th birthday this year were also invited. It was a very pleasant afternoon, chatting with the practice well-being team and sharing an amazing celebratory cake!

Rail station ticket office closures - Public Consultation - you may have read or heard the news about the proposals to change the way rail ticket offices are staffed. South Western Railway (SWR) has launched a public consultation to gather your views about changes to customer service at 153 stations out of 190 on the network, Gillingham and other stations along the Blackmore Vale line included.

As far as I can work out, Gillingham will be identified as a ‘Category 3’ station, one of 97 ‘Category 3’ stations across the SWR network, meaning there will be at least one member of staff available at set times. They will be multi-skilled and able to support customers to buy tickets using digital channels and from the ticket vending machine, help plan journeys, answer any queries, advise on the cheapest fares available, help with boarding and alighting from the train and supporting those with additional accessibility requirements.

SWR will have staff available at alternate stations on either Mondays to Saturdays or Tuesdays to Sundays to ensure customers are never too far from a station with support. SWR is investing in video-calling capabilities on ticket vending machines at ‘Category 3’ stations. This will allow customers to see and interact with staff at a video call centre, providing additional support when no staff are physically present. Customers will still be able to access the same products and services: standard tickets, monthly, weekly season tickets and Railcards.

Further information about the proposed changes can be found at:

www.southwesternrailway.com/stationchange. The **consultation** can be found at:
<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/ticket-office-consultation/> or you can email your response
to TicketOffice.SWR@transportfocus.org.uk.

All feedback must be received by Wednesday 26th July 2023. It is important that we respond to the consultation to show how important our local station is to the community and how much we appreciate having members of staff on site to help with queries and issues with getting tickets - I know I do!

Belinda Ridout, Councillor for the Gillingham Ward
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